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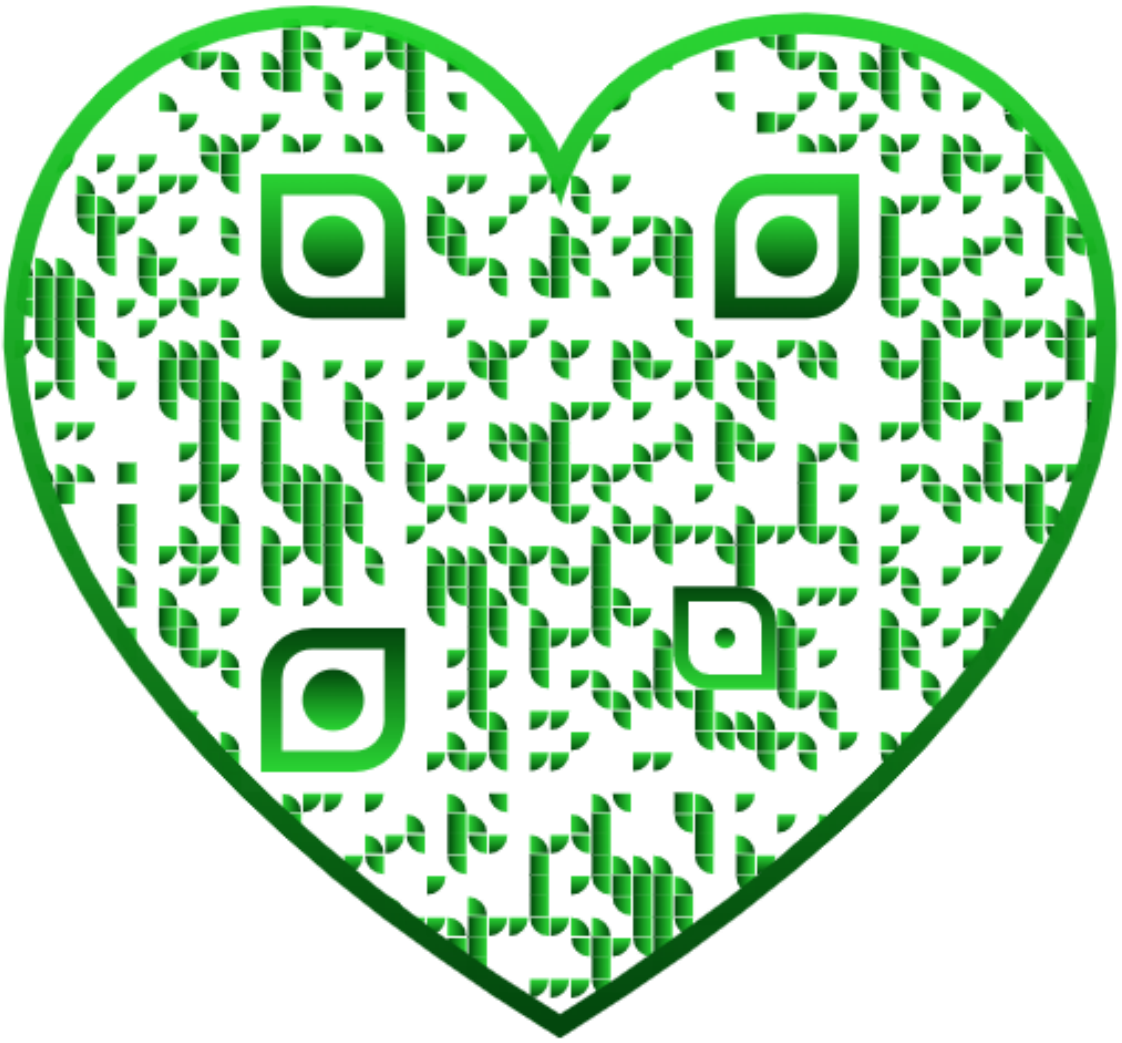

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Standing Together 80 Years On

Eighty years ago, the Axis forces, led by Germany, Japan and Italy, surrendered after a campaign of fascist imperialism that cost the world some 80 million lives.

For China, the surrender brought an end to 14 years of invasion, subjugation and ruthless violence. It also signified China's victory in its War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and, more broadly, its victory as one of the major members of the Allied forces in World War II, also known in China as the World Anti-Fascist War.

Having entered the modern era with the outbreak of the First Opium War in 1840, and subsequently being the object of military aggression by multiple foreign powers, China's long-fought and hard-won success in defeating the Japanese aggressors was and remains especially meaningful—its first success in repelling an invading force in modern times.

Since 1840, the year that marked the beginning of a century of turmoil, national rejuvenation has been the greatest dream of the Chinese people. China's plan for national rejuvenation by the middle of this century is a reflection of that dream. The plan extends beyond the nation's own revival to include the building of a community with a shared future for humanity—an open, inclusive, clean and beautiful world that enjoys lasting peace, universal security and common prosperity. Its position as a main center and the longest-running battlefield in the World Anti-Fascist War, as well as its central role in the formation of the United Nations, have forged in China a strong will to foster a global commitment to avoiding the mistakes of the past.

It is with this history and with these aspirations in mind that China held a grand gathering for the 80th anniversary of the victory in the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and the World Anti-Fascist War in Beijing on September 3. A military parade during the gathering showcased the latest achievements in the development of China's military capabilities. It sent a clear signal: The country's armed forces form a consistent and firm front in maintaining world peace and China's development strengthens global peace.

The gathering was an opportunity to recognize the great sacrifices and enormous contributions made by the Chinese people and their allies around the world in the global war against fascism. The Chinese people will continue to stand with people all over the world to safeguard the UN-centered international system and the international order underpinned by international law. **BR**

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Address at the Commemoration of the 80th Anniversary of The Victory of the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and the World Anti-Fascist War

Xi Jinping

Beijing, September 3, 2025

Today, we gather here to solemnly commemorate the 80th anniversary of the victory of the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and the World Anti-Fascist War. It is an occasion for us to remember history, honor fallen heroes, cherish peace, and create a better future.

On behalf of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, the National People's Congress, the State Council, the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, and the Central Military Commission, I pay high tribute to our veteran soldiers and comrades, patriots, and officers who fought in the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, and to the Chinese nationals from home and abroad who made important contributions to our victory. I express my sincere thanks to foreign governments and friends that supported and assisted the Chinese people in resisting aggression. I also extend a warm welcome to our guests from around the world who are with us today.

The Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression was a great war fought with tenacity and valor. Under the banner of the national united front against Japanese aggression established at the initiative of the Communist Party of China, the Chinese people stood up to fight the formidable enemy with an iron will, formed a great wall with flesh and blood to defend the nation, and ultimately achieved the first complete victory in resisting foreign aggression in modern times.

The Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression was an important part of the World Anti-Fascist War. With huge national sacrifice, the Chinese people made major contributions to saving human civilization and safeguarding world peace.

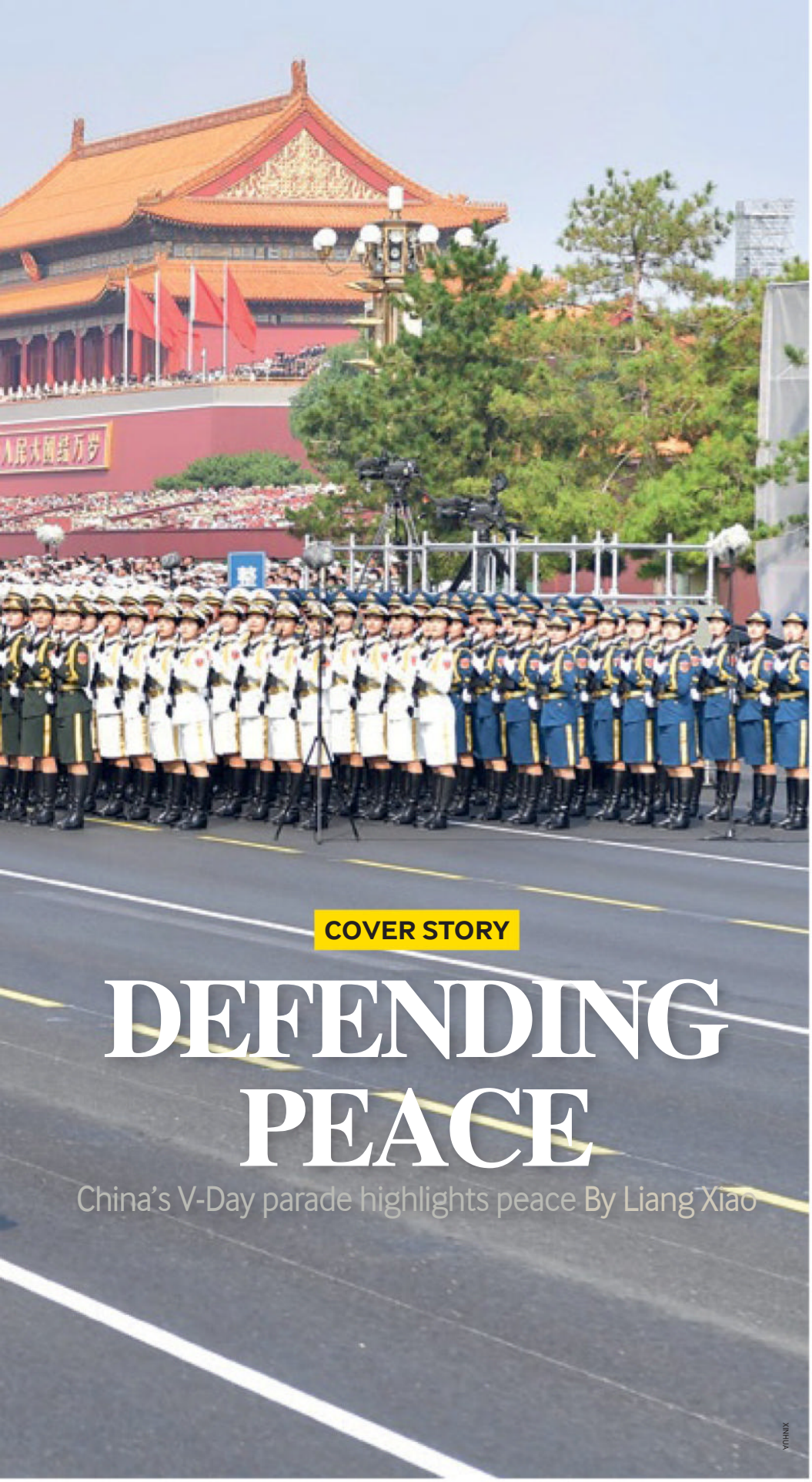
History cautions us that humanity rises and falls together. Only when all countries and nations treat each other as equals, coexist in peace and support each other, can we uphold common security, eradicate the root cause of war, and prevent the recurrence of historical tragedies.

The Chinese nation is a great nation that is never intimidated by any bullies and always values independence and forges ahead. In the past, when faced with critical struggles between good and evil, light and darkness, progress and reaction, the Chinese people rallied together to defy the enemy. They fought for the survival of the country, for the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, and for justice of the whole humanity. Today, humanity again has to choose between peace and war, dialogue and confrontation, win-win cooperation and zero-sum game. The Chinese people firmly stand on the right side of history and the progress of human civilization. We will remain committed to the path of peaceful development, and join hands with all peoples around the world in building a community with a shared future for humanity.

The Chinese People's Liberation Army has been, and will always be, the heroic armed forces that the Party and the people can fully trust and rely on. All service members should faithfully perform their sacred duty, speed up the building of a world-class military, and firmly safeguard China's sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity. All service members should provide strategic support for the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation and make greater contributions to the peace and development of the world.

History carries the legacy of the past and inspires the future. On the new journey in the new era, the Chinese people of all ethnic groups should, under the strong leadership of the Communist Party of China, follow Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought, Deng Xiaoping Theory, the Theory of Three Represents and the Scientific Outlook on Development, and fully implement the Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for the New Era. We should stay firmly on the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and carry forward the great spirit of the War of Resistance. We should press ahead with enterprise and resolve, and advance in unity the cause of building China into a great country on all fronts and realizing great national rejuvenation through Chinese modernization.

The great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation is irresistible! The noble cause of peace and development of humanity will prevail! **BR**



Chinese President Xi Jinping, also General Secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and Chairman of the Central Military Commission, reviews troops participating in the military parade in Beijing on September 3

COVER STORY

DEFENDING PEACE

China's V-Day parade highlights peace By Liang Xiao

A grand Victory Day military parade was held in Beijing on September 3 to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the victory in the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and the World Anti-Fascist War.

Eighty years after the victory, the world, however, still confronts daunting challenges. "Today, humanity again has to choose between peace and war, dialogue and confrontation, win-win cooperation and zero-sum game," President Xi Jinping said in his address before reviewing troops on that day.

He called on nations to "uphold common security, eradicate the root cause of war and prevent the recurrence of historical tragedies."

Upholding justice and safeguarding peace have become pressing imperatives for global governance. A core message sent by the V-Day parade is a declaration to the people of China and the world: China has never forgotten the lessons of history, and it treasures the peace so dearly won, and stands ready to work with all peace-loving nations to safeguard justice and stability.

"The Chinese people firmly stand on the right side of history and the progress of human civilization. We will remain committed to the path of peaceful development, and join hands with all peoples around the world in building ▶▶

a community with a shared future for humanity," Xi said.

Resisting aggression

At the V-Day parade held in Beijing a decade ago, 300 veterans of the war of resistance against Japanese aggression (1931-45) took part in the parade in vehicles. This year, fewer than 100 veterans are still with us, with an average age of 99. Six representatives sat on the Tiananmen Rostrum, joining President Xi and leaders from 26 countries to watch the ceremony. As President Xi, Russian President Vladimir Putin, the top leader of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea Kim Jong Un, and other dignitaries took turns greeting the veterans, a crowd of 50,000 in Tiananmen Square broke into thunderous applause, paying tribute to the heroes.

More than 80 years ago, these heroes fought against Japanese invaders, along with other valiant people, to save the nation and its people.

"The Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression was an important part of the World Anti-Fascist War. With huge national sacrifice, the Chinese people made major contributions to saving human civilization and safeguarding world peace," President Xi said in his V-Day speech.

At the cost of over 35 million lives, the Chinese people won the final victory. For China, it marked the first complete triumph over foreign invasion since the Opium War of 1840.

The forces led by the Communist Party of China (CPC) fought tenaciously during the war of resistance against Japanese aggression. Under the CPC's leadership, anti-Japanese forces fought more than 125,000 battles, annihilating over 1.7 million Japanese invaders and their puppet troops in China, according to an editorial recently published in newspaper *People's Daily*. They established 19 anti-Japanese democratic base areas and liberated a population of roughly 100 million. By the closing stages of the war, they were confronting nearly 60 percent of the invading Japanese forces and 95 percent of the puppet troops.

Promoting peaceful development

China is committed to peaceful development and uses its development to contribute to world peace and development.

In the past decades, China has fought a battle against poverty and backwardness. Today, the country stands as the world's second largest economy and the world's largest

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Veterans salute the passing parade

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A flag-guarding air echelon attends the military parade. Three helicopters flew by with banners that respectively read "justice prevails," "peace prevails" and "the people prevail"

manufacturing powerhouse. It has held the leading position in manufacturing for 15 straight years.

Whereas during the 14-year war of resistance against Japanese aggression, the disparity in overall national strength between China and Japan was staggering. According to historical records, in 1937, when Japan launched its full-scale war of aggression against China, its annual industrial output totaled $6 billion, compared with China's $1.36 billion. China's per-capita GDP was barely one 20th of Japan's. That same year, Japan produced 5.8 million tons of steel, while China managed only 40,000 tons. Japan's military spending was roughly 10 times greater than China's, and it turned out 1,580 aircraft, 744 pieces of heavy artillery, and warships with a combined displacement of 52,400 tons. China, by contrast, had almost no heavy industry at all—its numbers were virtually nil.

Now amid global uncertainty, China has emerged as a key stabilizing force in driving economic development, wrote Song Wei, a professor with the School of International Relations and Diplomacy, Beijing Foreign Studies University in an article in Beijing-based newspaper *Global Times*. Song said that in recent years, China has contributed about 30 percent of annual global growth, making it the largest engine of the world economy. Despite sharp shifts in global dynamics over the past year, China's economy has demonstrated resilience and adaptability under pressure. In the first half of 2025, China's GDP grew by 5.3 percent year on year, underscoring its continued role as a major driver of global growth.

Developing a force of deterrence

The V-Day military parade, attended by more than 10,000 soldiers, over 100 aircraft and hundreds of ground armaments, demonstrated the transformation of the armed forces from a backward army into a modern military. It showcased the new structure of services and arms of the People's Liberation Army—an outcome of the recent military reform. Troops from the four services, namely, the Army, the Navy, the Air Force and the Rocket Force, as well as the four arms, including the Aerospace Force, the Cyberspace Force, the Information Support Force and the Joint Logistics Support Force, marched past Tiananmen Square.

Advanced armaments were put on display, including unmanned intelligence and counter-unmanned equipment, hypersonic missiles, directed-energy weapons and electronic jamming systems.

At a press conference days prior to the parade, Wu Zeke, Deputy Director of the Parade Leadership Group Office and a senior officer of the Joint Staff Department of the Central Military Commission, explained that all the weapons and equipment on display were drawn ▸▸

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An honor guard escorts the Chinese national flag for a flag-raising ceremony

from domestically produced, active-service main battle systems, with many making their first public appearance.

Despite showcasing its advanced weaponry, China maintains that military power is built to deter conflict, not to wage it.

According to Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*, the supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting. At its core, it holds that strong deterrence or the limited use of force can curb conflict and secure peace.

Today, the Chinese people enjoy a peaceful life. One telling detail from the parade drew wide attention. While covering the event live, Alobaidi Ameen, a reporter with China Arab TV, headquartered in Dubai—and an Iraqi who rose to online fame in China for his fluent standard Chinese—was seen shedding tears on camera. He said that having endured two wars as a child, he knows all too well the value of peace, and he longs for the people of the Middle East to enjoy the same peaceful life as the Chinese.

But between 1840 and 1945, the reality was starkly different. For more than a century, China's territory was repeatedly invaded by multiple countries, culminating with Japanese aggression, leaving behind a trail of atrocities too numerous to record—inflicting immense suffering on the Chinese people. These included the Nanjing Massacre, in which over 300,000 lives were brutally taken, and the use of bacteriological and chemical warfare in blatant violation of international law. Such horrors etched deep scars in China's historical memory, and the belief that backwardness left it vulnerable to attack became ingrained across generations. Many came to see that the surest way to preserve peace is for a peace-loving nation to maintain armed strength sufficient to deter any would-be aggressor.

Lasting peace is not secured through goodwill grounded in endless concessions, but through the strength that makes would-be aggressors think twice. A peace-loving nation draws its greatest power not from its teeth or attack, but from the defense and deterrence that compel any provocateur to reckon with the consequences.

China values military strength but does not idolize force; it strives for national and military strength, yet rejects the logic that power inevitably leads to hegemony; it stands against unjust wars, yet does not fear wars imposed upon it. The Chinese people hold fast to the profound truth that justice will prevail, and to the historical law that a just cause commands broad support, while injustice can never triumph.

"Might may rule the moment, but right prevails forever. Justice, light and progress will inevitably triumph over evil, darkness, and regression. At all times, we must advocate the

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More than 50,000 guests were invited to watch the parade on site

common values of humanity, resolutely defend international fairness and justice, and ensure righteousness prevails and brightness shines in our world," Xi said at the reception commemorating the 80th anniversary of the victory after the military parade.

From the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence to the contemporary vision of building a community with a shared future for humanity, China has, in the more than 70 years since the founding of the People's Republic, never initiated a war or conflict, nor seized an inch of foreign land. It remains the only major power to have written peaceful development into both its Constitution and the Constitution of its ruling party, elevating it to the status of national will—and the only nuclear power to commit to a no-first-use policy for nuclear weapons.

United for peace

Representatives of people who had supported China during its war of resistance against Japanese aggression were invited to come view the parade in person. In his V-Day speech, Xi expressed gratitude to the foreign governments and international friends that supported China during the war.

Today, China has helped other countries to keep peace. China is the largest contributor of troops and a key player in United Nations peacekeeping operations among the UN Security Council permanent members. So far, it has deployed over 5,000 peacekeepers and maintaining a standing force of 8,000 personnel ready for UN missions. It is also the second-largest contributor to the UN peacekeeping budget.

On September 3, Chinese soldiers who have participated in UN peacekeeping operations made their first appearance in a V-Day parade.

China has remained steadfast in upholding the purposes and principles of the UN Charter. In the past 35 years, Chinese peacekeepers have carried out missions in over 20 countries and regions, with 17 officers and soldiers laying down their lives. Over the past 15 years, the hospital ship *Peace Ark* has sailed across three oceans and six continents, delivering medical care to more than 370,000 people.

These actions speak to China's pledge to the world: China's development is not a threat, but a growing source of peace; its growing strength will bring greater positive energy to the cause of peace and development.

As the parade drew to a close, 80,000 pigeons soared into the sky above Tiananmen Square—an emblem not only of the glory of victory, but of a solemn pledge of peace. **BR**

Copyedited by G.P. Wilson
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The Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy formation

COVER STORY

PARADE SNAPSHOTS

A military parade was held in Beijing on September 3 to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the victory in the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and the World Anti-Fascist War. The parade was filled with unforgettable scenes, from veterans saluting from the Tiananmen Rostrum to the 45 formations and echelons that participated in the grand event. With much of the weaponry and equipment making their public debut, the occasion was an impressive sight for the tens of thousands who gathered on site to watch and the millions watching around the nation and the world.

The 70-minute military parade demonstrated the transformation of the armed forces from a "millet-and-rifle" army to a modern military. More than 10,000 soldiers participated in the parade, which included over 100 aircraft and hundreds of ground armaments. *Beijing Review* presents a selection of photographs capturing some of the day's remarkable moments. **BR**

(*Photos by Xinhua News Agency*)

Comments to yanwei@cicgamericas.com

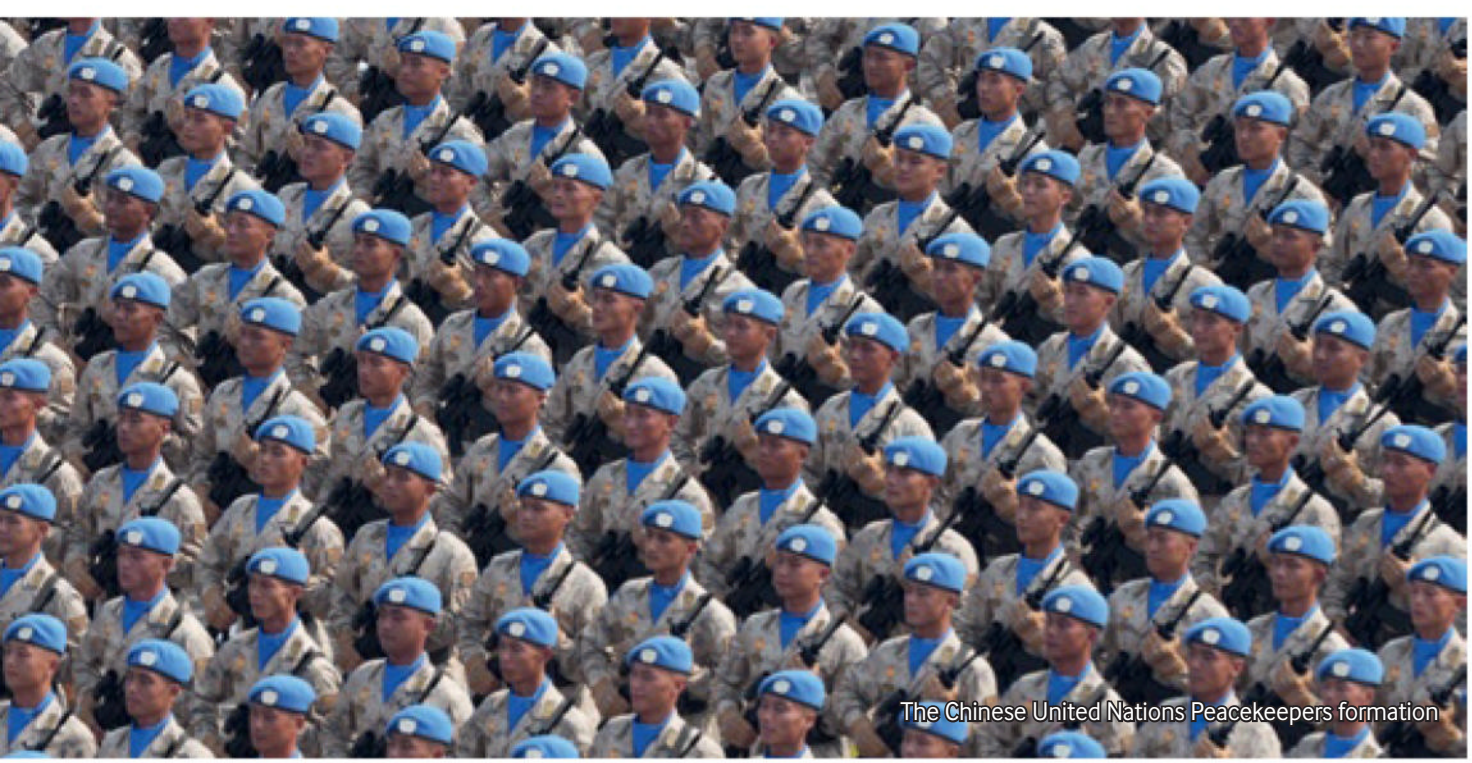
The PLA Air Force formation

The PLA Army formation

The PLA Rocket Force formation

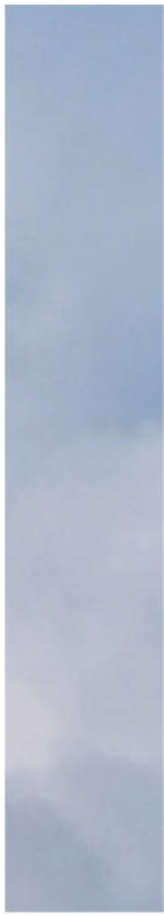
The militia formation

The flag-guarding echelon flies over Tiananmen Square

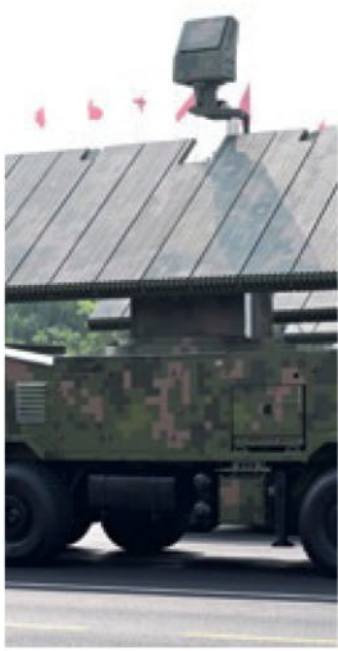


The Chinese United Nations Peacekeepers formation

The airborne unmanned warfare formation



The nuclear missile formation



The refueler and receiver echelon

The anti-unmanned aerial vehicles formation

The sea-based unmanned warfare formation

COVER STORY

WHAT WAR MEANS

In a recent interview with *Beijing Review*, **Wang Chaoguang**, former Director of the Institute of World History, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, explained why victory over fascism should be commemorated eight decades on. Edited excerpts from the interview follow:

***Beijing Review*: Why do Chinese sources often refer to World War II (WWII) as the World Anti-Fascist War? How are they different and what is the relationship between the two?**

Wang Chaoguang: China refers to WWII as the World Anti-Fascist War in recognition of its nature as a war primarily against the aggression of Nazi Germany, fascist Italy, militarist Japan and others, forming the Axis powers—commonly called the fascist camp. On the other side were countries including China, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom and the United States, forming the Allied powers—commonly called the anti-fascist camp.

The Axis powers launched aggressive wars of conquest, violating the sovereignty of the nations they invaded. In the process, they committed genocide, large-scale massacres of civilians, indiscriminate bombing of cities, the deployment of biological and chemical weapons, the forced conscription of laborers, the sexual slavery of women, the mistreatment of prisoners of war, and other grave violations of fundamental human rights, humanitarian principles and human dignity. These crimes against humanity flagrantly contravened international justice and law. They have been universally recognized as war crimes and were confirmed as such at the Nuremberg and Tokyo trials following the war.

For these reasons, China honors the great victory of the World Anti-Fascist War as a triumph of justice over evil. Referring to WWII as the World Anti-Fascist War highlights its nature and origins and is a reminder of what was at stake in the conflict.

Many people around the world consider the war in China to be part of the Pacific theater, not a separate theater. But actually, the Chinese people held ground in a main Eastern theater of the World Anti-Fascist War. What can you share on this topic?

The Eastern theater of the World Anti-Fascist War mainly comprised three interconnected yet distinct theaters: the China theater, the Southeast Asia theater and the Pacific theater. Although together they form what is often called the Eastern theater, each operated more or less separately in military terms. It is incorrect to regard the China theater as part of the Pacific theater.

China was the first to resist fascist aggression (beginning in 1931). In other words, China was the earliest to recognize the global threat posed by fascist expansion and stand up against fascist aggression.

China's resistance lasted the longest (1931-45). During those 14 years, China tied down vast numbers of Japanese troops as well as huge military, economic and social resources—resources that could otherwise have been deployed elsewhere. China's forces destroyed

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Chinese troops rush to the Lugou Bridge, also known as the Marco Polo Bridge, in the suburbs of Beijing following an incident there on July 7, 1937. The Lugou Bridge Incident, in which invading Japanese forces attacked a town near the bridge, was the beginning of China's all-out war of resistance against Japanese aggression

XINHUA

The International Military Tribunal for the Far East in session in Tokyo, Japan. The tribunal, which lasted from 1946 to 1948, convicted 25 Japanese militarists of responsibility for war crimes and crimes against humanity

large numbers of Japanese troops. In doing so, China suffered enormous casualties and losses. The country also sent expeditionary units abroad to fight alongside Allied forces and provided other Allied nations with military and economic support.

China supported the independence movements of colonized peoples, making a vital contribution to the post-war wave of decolonization and the rise of newly independent states. For instance, Korea established a provisional government in Shanghai in 1919 to resist Japanese colonial rule. Following the Japanese invasion of China, it was moved to Chongqing in the southwest.

China played a key role in shaping the post-war international order centered on the United Nations. By becoming both a founding member of the UN and a permanent member of the UN Security Council, China's important status within and contribution to the anti-fascist Allies were fully affirmed and highly praised at the time.

What lessons did the world learn from the World Anti-Fascist War and what relevance do they continue to hold in today's world?

WWII brought tremendous sacrifices and heavy losses to humanity and the world. Reflecting on the past and taking history as a mirror, the international community has drawn ample lessons from this war, which remain of great relevance.

At critical junctures in history, one should stand on the side of what is right. In brief, this means upholding humanity's shared values, promoting human rights, humanitarianism and human dignity, and safeguarding peace and development so that people can live under the sunshine of peace rather than be trapped in the horrors of war.

We must share historical and contemporary responsibilities, uphold justice and fairness, protect every country's right to equitable development and promote progress among all nations.

We must uphold the post-war international order. This order was won at great cost by humanity, still holds vital importance today and must not be allowed to be dismantled, lest the world descend once more into chaos.

We must resist hegemonic bullying by a few states—whether political, economic, cultural or otherwise. Such bullying undermines the equal right of all peoples to develop. In light of the lessons of WWII, this warning ought to resonate ever more strongly. **BR**

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REMEMBERING THE FORGOTTEN

In his book *Forgotten Ally: China's World War II, 1937-1945*, **Rana Mitter**, British historian and a professor of U.S.-Asia relations at the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, offers a deeply researched account of China's war against Japanese aggression in the 1930s and 40s, as well as the country's long-overlooked role in the global fight against fascism. In an exclusive interview with *Beijing Review* reporters Peng Jiawei and Tao Xing, Mitter discusses China's place among the Allied forces, the trauma the war inflicted on ordinary lives, how the war reshaped the country's international standing and why this chapter of history remains underrepresented—and why it matters now more than ever. Edited excerpts from their conversation follow:

***Beijing Review*: What made you want to write about China's role in World War II (WWII)? And why did you choose "Forgotten Ally" as the title of your book?**

Rana Mitter: I use "Forgotten Ally" as the title—technically, it is the American title—for the book quite deliberately. Because if you ask most Westerners who the major Allied powers were, they would probably say the United States, the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom.

But they might not remember that China was not only one of the Allied powers, but actually the first—if you count the beginning of the war in Asia, before it started in Europe.

Even in 2025, if you ask most people from outside China what they know about China's experience during WWII, the answer is going to be quite limited.

Perhaps they've heard a bit about the Nanjing Massacre, the infamous atrocity that occurred in the winter of 1937-38—or know the names of a few invasions and bombings. But the details of these events remain largely unfamiliar, even now.

The broader period of modern Chinese history in which the war falls—between the 1911 Revolution that ended China's last imperial dynasty, the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), and the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949—is a particularly fascinating period, one that is marked by sweeping change within a relatively short span of time.

Of all the upheavals during those decades, WWII is arguably the most transformative.

Looking more closely at the history, one sees the staggering number of deaths, the refugee crisis, the massive destruction of China's infrastructure during that period and the profound shifts that took place in Chinese society in those years.

It was so transformative—not only for China, but for the entire world—that I felt that this largely forgotten story deserved to be told more fully. And that stimulated me to write the book, *Forgotten Ally*.

In what ways was China's wartime experience transformative for the world? And if it was so significant, why has it been largely forgotten?

To better understand the relevance of China, I would point people to the year 1938.

Why 1938? First of all, for most people who consider the war to have begun in Europe in 1939, it's important to remember that after the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, which occurred just outside Beijing, known in those days as Beiping, on July 7, 1937, China and Japan quickly escalated into an all-out war. (On July 7, 1937, invading Japanese forces attacked a town near the Lugou Bridge, also known as the Marco Polo Bridge, in the suburbs of Beijing—*Ed.*)

What was the country's situation at that point? It had no foreign allies, and most people, including many foreign diplomats from Western countries, believed its case was hopeless, that China stood little chance of defeating the Japanese.

Remember, most of China's great heartland cities, including Beijing, Shanghai, Nanjing and Guangzhou, were essentially under Japanese occupation, and it seemed only a matter of time before Japan would conquer the rest of China.

In hindsight, continuing the fight appears to have been the right decision, as China ultimately became one of the Allied powers, and the Allies did go on to win the war. But in 1938, choosing to fight, rather than striking a deal with Japan, was a high-stakes decision for China's wartime leaders.

That is why it is worth remembering that had China not continued to hold on at that moment, the course of the war in Asia could have unfolded very differently. And with it, the trajectory of WWII—including the fight against Hitler in Europe—might have looked very different.

That story of China as a wartime ally had basically dissolved in the early years of the Cold War, which changed the way all sides looked at each other.

In 1945, China was a wartime ally of the U.S., and Japan the defeated enemy. Just five years later, those positions had reversed: Japan had become a firm Cold War ally of the U.S., while China didn't even have diplomatic relations with the latter.

So the story of China's wartime experience did not find an obvious audience in the U.S.

In *Forgotten Ally*, you interweave multiple accounts and perspectives—from major historical figures to soldiers, journalists, missionaries and civilians. How does this blend of

perspectives shape and deepen our understanding of China's wartime experiences?

One of the key goals for me in writing *Forgotten Ally* was not only to tell the stories of prominent historical figures, but also to call forth the so-called "little people"— those whose names may be forgotten, yet whose experiences were tremendously important to understanding the history of that time.

One area that has only recently begun to receive attention from both Chinese and Western scholars is the massive refugee crisis that unfolded during the war years.

Millions of civilians from east China were forced to flee inland, traveling by boat or on foot for weeks or even months, toward the wartime capital of Chongqing [in the southwest], often not knowing whether they would ever return home.

We have these wonderful, yet often heartbreaking, accounts of the conditions they faced. Many lived in makeshift wooden shelters built with temporary roofs and windows—because there simply wasn't enough housing to accommodate the influx of thousands upon thousands of people into southwest China.

This mass displacement was one of the events that profoundly shaped the changing Chinese society at that time. These refugees, often referred to as *xiajiangren*, or "people from downriver," had to integrate themselves into new communities where the local culture could be very different from their own.

This encounter between different populations not only changed the way the Chinese people imagined their own geography, but also helped forge a national consciousness that would continue to shape the country for decades to come.

For me, hearing these voices and understanding why people were displaced and how they coped was an integral part of the wider story of the war. The diversity of perspectives reminds us that war is not only about ideology, violence or the clash of forces. Above all, it is about people—their aspirations, hopes, desires and choices.

XINHUA

Attendees observe a moment of silence at the 11th national memorial ceremony for the Nanjing Massacre victims, held at the Memorial Hall of the Victims in Nanjing Massacre by Japanese Invaders in Nanjing, Jiangsu Province, on December 13, 2024

How did China's wartime experience reshape its role on the global stage?

I would say that WWII was the time when China shifted from being a semi-colonized victim of imperialism to being an independent state and one of the makers of global orders.

A clear example of this transformation came in 1945, when China sent a delegation to San Francisco to sign the United Nations Charter. This essentially paved the way for China to secure one of the five permanent seats on the UN Security Council, alongside the UK, the Soviet Union, the U.S. and France.

My research is now moving into what I call the post-war period, where China began actively participating in the work of the UN. During this time, a new global economic order was also taking shape with the creation of institutions such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and other key bodies—where China also began to assume a more important role.

Does the term "forgotten ally" still hold true today, and why is it important to revisit and bring this chapter of history back into focus?

I do think Western perceptions have changed—and are continuing to change. If you visit, for example, the National World War II Museum in New Orleans, the U.S., or the Imperial War Museum in London, the UK, you will now find displays that speak in much greater depth about China's wartime role. I don't think those displays would have existed 20 or 25 years ago.

In major global histories of the war, China's role is now mentioned much more prominently as well.

However, there is still a long way to go. China's wartime experience is just still less well-covered in much of the outside world than other major theaters such as Western Europe, North Africa and the Pacific.

It is impossible to make sense of today's rapidly changing global order without understanding the part China played in shaping it—a role that stretches back as far as the 1930s and 1940s. China was not only involved in the formation of key institutions, such as the UN, but also a key wartime ally whose resistance helped keep an Asian front open against Japan at a time when it would be easier to surrender.

The entire course of the global war would have been very different if China surrendered; in that case, the Cold War and the entire post-1945 world would have looked very different. This is worth remembering, but still not well-understood.

So even in a very different age today, 80 years after the end of WWII, it is important to remember China's role—and to understand the many complex, and in many ways still under-examined, aspects of that history, which continue to call for further historical study and reflection. **BR**

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COVER STORY

THE FORGOTTEN ALLY'S SACRIFICE

By Carlos Martinez

On September 2, the world observed 80 years since the signing of the Japanese Instrument of Surrender, bringing an end to World War II (WWII).

In his book *China's War With Japan: 1937-1945*, British historian Rana Mitter writes, "For decades, our understanding of that global conflict (WWII—*Ed.*) has failed to give a proper account of the role of China. If China was considered at all, it was as a minor player, a bit-part actor in a war where the United States, the Soviet Union and Britain played much more significant roles."

In reality, China was the first country to wage war against fascist occupation, and the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-45) was of decisive importance to the overall global victory over fascism. Over the course of 14 years of war, China suffered over 35 million casualties and around 20 percent of its people were made refugees.

The year was 1931...

Japan's colonial ambitions had long targeted China and Korea. After seizing Taiwan and parts of northeast China in 1895 and consolidating power after the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05) in northeast China, Tokyo tightened its grip through the 21 Demands of 1915, a set of demands put forward by the Japanese Government that impinged on Chinese sovereignty.

On September 18, 1931, Japanese troops staged a false-flag attack on a section of railway under their control in Shenyang, Liaoning Province, using it as a pretext to occupy the entire northeast of China and establish the puppet state of "Manchukuo," with a population of 35 million.

Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang (KMT) government pursued "non-resistance"—signing the 1933 Tanggu Agreement with Japan, under which Chinese troops had to withdraw from the strategic passes along the Great Wall, and prioritizing its war against the Communists over defending China's sovereignty. Resistance was instead waged by volunteer armies organized largely by the Communist Party of China (CPC). It is noteworthy that these volunteer armies included many Koreans, including Kim Il Sung, at a time when the Korean resistance movement against Japanese colonization was centered in northeast China.

In 1936, guerrilla units were united as the Northeast Anti-Japanese United Army, led by the CPC and supported by the Soviet Union. The United Army, despite limited resources, was able to harass Japanese occupation forces and keep the spirit of resistance alive.

The call for a united front

Growing popular resentment toward Chiang's policy of appeasement culminated in the December 1935 student protests demanding nationwide resistance. Although these protests were brutally suppressed, pressure was building on the KMT government. Later that month, CPC leader Mao Zedong delivered a report, On Tactics Against Japanese Imperialism, in which he highlighted the urgent need to establish a national united front to fight the invaders:

"The Japanese imperialists have already shown their intention of penetrating south of the Great Wall and occupying all China… The workers and the peasants are all demanding resistance… What is the basic tactical task of the Party? It is none other than to form a broad revolutionary national united front… The plain truth is that only a force of such magnitude can crush the Japanese imperialists and the traitors and collaborators."

In December 1936, patriotic KMT generals detained Chiang in Xi'an, Shaanxi Province, forcing him to accept cooperation with the Communists in the interests of united national resistance against Japan. Though Chiang wavered, the United Front was formally established in 1937 after the beginning of Japan's full-scale invasion following the Marco Polo Bridge Incident on July 7 of that year, in which Japanese forces attacked Chinese soldiers at Lugou Bridge, also known as the Marco Polo Bridge, in the suburbs of Beijing.

The CPC's message of unity resonated with the vast majority of the Chinese people. "Defend our homeland to the last drop of our blood! Let the people of the whole country, the government and the armed forces unite and build up the national united front as our solid Great Wall of resistance!" read an open telegram issued by the CPC Central Committee on July 8, 1937.

Heroism and sacrifice

Under the united front against Japanese aggression, the CPC-led Red Army's northern units became the Eighth Route Army and the southern units the New Fourth Army. On September 25, 1937, the Eighth Route Army scored the first major victory for the Chinese forces since the onset of the full-scale war at Pingxingguan, Shanxi Province,

XINHUA

Overseas Chinese drivers and mechanics who returned from Southeast Asia during the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression assemble for military training in Kunming, Yunnan Province, in 1939

destroying a Japanese division and puncturing the myth of Japanese invincibility.

The major cities, many of which located on the eastern seaboard, fell to Japan in the second half of 1937, starting with Beijing and Tianjin in July, Shanghai in November, and the KMT's capital Nanjing in December. Atrocities were perpetrated everywhere, but the then Chinese capital of Nanjing was singled out for the most horrific episode of mass murder and widespread rape in history.

The International Military Tribunal for the Far East, also known as the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal, the Eastern counterpart to the Nuremberg trials, estimated that 260,000 people were killed in the weeks following Japan's seizure of Nanjing. Tens of thousands of women were raped. The Nanjing Massacre is widely understood to be, in the memorable words of the late Chinese-American historian Iris Chang, the author of *The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II*, "an orgy of cruelty seldom if ever matched in world history." (The massacre following the Japanese troops' capture of Nanjing on December 13, 1937, left more than 300,000 Chinese civilians and unarmed soldiers dead, according to Chinese statistics—*Ed.*)

With the KMT government retreating to Chongqing, the war became one of attrition. The CPC's guerrilla warfare, drawing on Mao's theory of the people's war, gained popular support. As Mao wrote in 1937, the people's war meant "military strength organized by the active people and inseparable from them." These ideas would go on to find applicability in many places around the world, including Viet Nam, Zimbabwe and Palestine.

Ultimately, the combined Chinese forces were able to fight Japan to a standstill. By tying down over 1 million Japanese troops—two thirds of Japan's military—Chinese forces played a decisive role in the wider Allied war effort.

Without China's endurance, Japan might have overrun Asia and invaded the Soviet Union. Instead, it was forced into a prolonged war of attrition, limiting its capacity elsewhere and buying vital time for the Allies.

A turning point in history

Marking the 70th anniversary of victory in 2015, President Xi Jinping declared that the war was "a decisive battle between justice and evil, between light and darkness, and between progress and reaction." He stressed its unique place in Chinese history:

"The victory of the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression is the first complete victory won by China in its resistance against foreign aggression in modern times. This great triumph crushed the plot of the Japanese militarists to colonize and enslave China and put an end to China's national humiliation of successive defeats at the hands of foreign aggressors. This great triumph re-established China as a major country and won the Chinese people respect of all peace-loving people around the world. This great triumph opened up bright prospects for the great renewal of the Chinese nation and set our ancient country on a new journey after gaining rebirth."

The war thus marked a turning point, laying the foundations for the CPC to lead the people to victory in the New Democratic Revolution and the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949.

China's victory resonated far beyond its borders. Japan's defeat gave impetus to anti-colonial forces across Asia.

The courage, sacrifice, daring and strategic brilliance demonstrated by the Chinese people in their war of resistance against Japanese aggression form an indelible chapter in the history of the struggle for a world free from fascism, militarism, colonialism and imperialism. **BR**

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COMMEMORATING VICTORY, CONFRONTING COMPLEXITIES

By Einar Tangen

On September 3, China hosted a military parade in Beijing to observe the 80th anniversary of the victory in the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and the World Anti-Fascist War. This event was more than a ceremonial display—it was a deeply symbolic moment that reflected China's historical memory, its evolving geopolitical posture and its vision for a multipolar world.

The parade featured more than 10,000 troops and advanced domestically-produced weaponry. Foreign dignitaries, including leaders from 26 countries, attended the event. It was designed to project strength, unity and historical continuity.

But perspectives differ, depending on whether you are looking from Beijing, Washington, Brussels, Tokyo or BRICS.

For China, the parade is a reaffirmation of national resilience and a tribute to wartime sacrifices. Between 1931 and 1945, China suffered roughly 35 million military and civilian casualties. The victory over Japan was not only a military triumph but indicated the end of foreign domination and the beginning of national rejuvenation.

The parade's emphasis on domestically-produced armaments organized by combat function sent a clear message: China is no longer militarily dependent on, or beholden to, foreign powers for its defense.

This arrangement reflected a strategic shift: Showcasing cutting-edge domestically-produced land, sea and air-based systems demonstrated the country's readiness to defend its sovereignty while contributing to global peace.

China's official narrative frames its military modernization as defensive and peace-oriented. The concept of a community with a shared future for humanity is central to this vision. It suggests a world order based on mutual respect, non-intervention and cooperative development.

The U.S.

From Washington's perspective, China's military parade was considered strategic competition. While the U.S. acknowledges the historical significance of World War II (WWII) commemorations, it often interprets them as displays of power that challenge the U.S.-led international order. In essence a projection of its own tactics and strategies.

Meanwhile, the resurgence of far-right ideologies, white nationalism and political polarization in the U.S. are eerily reminiscent of the issues behind the war whose end is being celebrated. Fascism, as history shows, is an evil that recedes but never disappears. The January 6 Capitol riot and the rise of extremist groups have drawn uncomfortable parallels to the ideological fervor of the 1930s. In this light, China's anti-fascist narrative resonates as a reminder of the dangers of unchecked nationalism and militarism.

Europe

Europe's response to China's parade is complex and divided. On the one hand, Germany and France have expressed concern over militarization and the erosion of liberal democratic norms. On the other hand, countries such as Hungary and Serbia view China's rise as a counterbalance to Western dominance. The European Union remains indecisively cautious, emphasizing dialogue and multilateralism while acknowledging China's growing influence and America's growing intransigence.

The parade was a reminder of Europe's own struggles with the past. The electoral gains of far-right parties—such as the AfD in Germany and National Rally in France—have reignited debates about historical revisionism and the fragility of post-war peace. In this context, China's emphasis on anti-fascist legacy offers a sobering counterpoint to the erosion of historical truth, a reminder that the lessons of WWII must be actively preserved, not passively remembered.

Japan

Japan's response to the parade was shaped by a complex and often contested historical narrative. While the country has made strides in post-war pacifism and democratic development, unresolved issues from its wartime past continue to cast a shadow. The legacy of the Nanjing Massacre, the exploitation of "comfort women" and the enshrinement of convicted war criminals at the Yasukuni Shrine remain deeply sensitive topics. These issues are compounded by educational materials that downplay or euphemize wartime atrocities, referring to them as mere "incidents."

China's commemoration served as both a reminder and a rebuke. It underscored the importance of historical accountability and the dangers of revisionism. For many in China, and across Asia, the parade was not only a celebration of victory but a call for justice and remembrance. In this context, Japan's muted engagement with its wartime legacy stands in contrast to the parade's emphasis on historical truth and anti-fascist solidarity.

BRICS

Among BRICS nations, the parade was largely viewed as a legitimate act of remembrance and a symbol of multipolar aspirations. Russia, in particular, shares a deep historical bond with

China rooted in wartime sacrifices. President Vladimir Putin's attendance at the parade underlined the historic and strategic alignment between the two nations. Both countries emphasize sovereignty, non-intervention and resistance to Western hegemony.

For many in the Global South, the parade symbolized an alternative vision of global order. It suggested that power can be distributed more equitably, allowing nations greater autonomy in shaping their destinies. Yet this vision is not without skepticism. While China's rhetoric emphasizes peace and cooperation, its growing economic and military footprint raises questions about the true nature of its intentions. Is China offering a genuinely non-interventionist model, or simply replacing one hegemon with another? To answer this, China can only point to its 12 years of Belt and Road investment, peaceful rise and advocacy for a multipolar world that respects the right to sovereignty, security and development for all countries. (The Belt and Road Initiative is a China-proposed framework to boost connectivity along and beyond the ancient Silk Road routes—*Ed.*)

XINHUA

Pigeons are released into the sky following the military parade commemorating the 80th anniversary of the victory in the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and the World Anti-Fascist War in Beijing on September 3

Fascism

At the heart of this commemoration lay a deeper lesson: Fascism is an evil that recedes but never disappears. The conditions that led to WWII—economic instability, ideological extremism and militaristic nationalism—are reemerging in several forms across the globe. From the rise of authoritarian leaders to the spread of disinformation and xenophobia, the world is once again confronting the specter of ideological conflict.

China's parade, with its emphasis on anti-fascist legacy, served as a warning to the present. It called for vigilance, unity and historical awareness. It reminds us that peace is not a given—it must be defended, nurtured and reimagined. The faltering international community must build safeguards against the resurgence of extremist ideologies.

Hegemony

One question raised by the parade is whether strength can be aligned with peace and equity. In the West, it is axiomatic that strong countries will seek hegemony. Yet, China has emphasized that its rise does not threaten global stability. Instead, it proposes a model where development contributes to peace rather than conflict.

It is a vision that will require the international community to reshape its norms so that power is exercised responsibly through consensus, not dictation. This includes creating mechanisms that foster transparency, accountability and multilateral cooperation. It also requires a redefinition of security—one that prioritizes human wellbeing over military dominance, and sovereignty over forced conquest. Only then can strength become a force for stability rather than a trigger for confrontation.

China's 2025 military parade was a moment of reflection, assertion and aspiration. It commemorated a painful yet pivotal chapter in history, honored the sacrifices of millions and projected a vision of national strength. But its meaning was not confined to China alone.

From the cautious gaze of Washington to the divided sentiments of Brussels, the denial of Japan, the solidarity of Moscow, to the hopes of the Global South, the parade was a mirror of our times. It demonstrated the enduring relevance of WWII memory, the complexities of global power and the urgent need to confront the ideologies that threaten peace.

In remembering the past, we are called to shape the future—with courage, clarity and compassion. **BR**

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COVER STORY

A GREAT GENERATION

A story of international solidarity in the fight for victory

By Tao Zihui

Eighty-two-year-old Zhou Youma slowly rose, his finger pointing toward the audience with a smile. "Müller is her father," he said, his gaze landing on Mimi Müller, daughter of German physician Hans Müller. A ripple of laughter swept the room. "Her father spent over 50 years in China, fought in countless battles—a true hero."

Zhou himself is the son of George Hatem, or Ma Haide, the American physician who adopted a Chinese name, who came to China in 1933 and spent more than five decades in the country saving lives, in wartime and peacetime. Müller too, was among the foreigners who stayed in China to offer medical services to the forces led by the Communist Party of China (CPC) during the war of resistance against Japanese aggression, and continued to help Chinese people to prevent and control diseases after the war.

The Japanese invasion of China began with the September 18 Incident in 1931 and escalated into full-scale war with the Lugou Bridge Incident, also known as the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, in 1937. Japan officially surrendered on September 2, 1945. China has designated September 3 as Victory Day.

Eighty years after the victory, Zhou and Mimi Müller met at a symposium held at Peking University on August 30 to observe the 80th anniversary of the victory. The event also commemorated the 120th anniversary of the birth of renowned American writer and journalist Edgar Snow.

Participants reflected on this history and the enduring spirit forged through the Allied fight against fascism in World War II (WWII).

At the symposium, Wang Gang, deputy head of the Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee, recounted how numerous international friends from across the globe supported China and its people in various ways, strengthening China's resistance efforts and boosting the confidence of the Chinese people during the war.

He expressed gratitude and respect for them. "The contributions of these international friends went beyond making China known to the world; they made China understood by the world," he said.

These international friends include Edgar Snow, Hans Müller, George Hatem, German businessman John Rabe, who co-created the Nanjing Safety Zone during the massacre in the city from late 1937 to early 1938, British journalist David Crook, who documented the events as they unfolded, and New Zealand-born industrial organizer Rewi Alley.

Addressing their descendants attending the symposium, Wang said, "In remembering these international friends, what can we learn? I believe it is the guardianship of human warmth, the reverence for historical truth, the respect for cultural differences and the steadfast belief in the common values of all humanity."

From distant shores

In 1927, Alley first set foot on Chinese soil. Starting as a factory inspector and fire officer in Shanghai, he later spearheaded the Chinese Industrial Cooperatives movement, known as Gung Ho, after the outbreak of war. This initiative organized displaced workers and refugees to produce essential goods for self-reliance and for the resistance against Japanese aggression.

In 1928, Snow arrived in China. In 1936, he broke through blockades to reach the Communist-led base area in northwest China (Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia region), conducting interviews, and later penned *Red Star Over China*. Through his reporting, for the first time, the world glimpsed the resolve of those fighting for China's liberation.

His wife, Helen Foster Snow (who wrote under the name Nym Wales), followed in his footsteps. She traveled to Yan'an, Shaanxi Province, in 1937, where she conducted extensive interviews that supplemented his work. She later authored *Inside Red China*—among other books. Her efforts provided invaluable biographical materials for understanding the Chinese communist movement.

In 1937, Hatem arrived in Yan'an. He became a frontier doctor and adopted his Chinese name. He later joined the CPC and became the first foreigner to obtain Chinese citizenship, dedicating his life to medical causes—particularly leprosy treatment.

That same year, Hans Müller, after earning his medical doctorate from Switzerland's Basel University, journeyed to China to join the war against Japanese aggression. In Yan'an, he met Mao Zedong and joined the Eighth Route Army. He joined the CPC in 1945 and continued to advance China's healthcare after the

Edgar Snow

John Rabe

FILE

Rewi Alley

Crook family

Helen Foster Snow

Hans Müller

George Hatem

founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949. Even on his deathbed, he urged his wife to not leave China.

These friends from afar—with pens, medical kits, factories and unyielding faith—stood shoulder to shoulder with the Chinese nation.

At the front line

Wang emphasized that China served as the main Eastern theater of the World Anti-Fascist War.

Over 14 years, the Chinese battlefield tied down a massive portion of Japan's military—more than 60 percent of its ground force, peaking at 94 percent, Wang said. This relentless resistance shattered Japan's goal of a quick victory and forced it into a protracted war of attrition.

China's tenacity came at a staggering cost: over 35 million Chinese casualties, with direct and indirect economic losses exceeding $600 billion (at the exchange rates back then), he said.

But by pinning down the▸▸

Japanese army, the country prevented Japan from effectively cooperating with its Nazi allies to attack other countries such as the Soviet Union, contributing significantly to the overall defeat of the Axis powers.

"Revisiting this history is not to dwell on grievances, but to affirm that fascism's defeat is a triumph for all of humanity," Wang said. "Every nation and people who bled in this struggle deserves remembrance."

A joint struggle

In 1938, Jewish-American journalist Israel Epstein saw an elderly woman with bound feet in Wuhan, Hubei Province, donate her only silver bracelet to a war relief fund. This image, etched in his memory, later inspired his book *The People's War*.

Born to a Polish Jewish family, Epstein moved to China at the age of 2—and later became a naturalized Chinese citizen. Following the Lugou Bridge Incident, he began his career as a war correspondent, exposing Japanese atrocities and covering the Chinese resistance efforts. He reported from the front lines in Beiping (Beijing), Wuhan and Xuzhou in Jiangsu Province, providing firsthand accounts of the fierce fight Chinese soldiers were putting up and the brutal realities of the aggression for international readers. He also happened to be a close friend of Alley's and extensively wrote about the Gung Ho movement.

In Nanjing, the Nanjing Safety Zone created by Rabe and fellow expats sheltered over 250,000 Chinese. His diaries remain among the most detailed accounts of the carnage.

Together, these international voices proclaimed: China is not a relic—it is a living nation resisting invasion with blood and flesh, Wang added.

The power of understanding

At the symposium, descendants and relatives of several other international friends also shared insights drawn from their unique family perspectives. They not only reflected on the courageous efforts and solidarity their ancestors demonstrated over 80 years ago, but also offered personal accounts of a dynamic and evolving China as they experience it today.

Sarah Stuart, Alley's great-niece, told *Beijing Review*, "It's very important to consider other perspectives and also never overlook the difference that one person can make just by looking out for others and being a witness to what you see and to what you know."

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CNSPHOTO

Launch of the Edgar Snow International Scholars Program, the International Friends Studies Database and the "New Era Snow" Global Media Initiative at a symposium at Peking University in Beijing on August 30

For instance, in New Zealand, the legacy of her great-uncle in China is not widely known. "I think it's important to tell those stories. We can understand a different perspective, a different way of seeing the world," she said.

The words of Michael Crook, the son of China's Friendship Medal winner Isabel Crook, carried historical gravity. He noted that Western narratives often date WWII to 1939, sidelining the China theater. "Without our own discourse, one-sided histories persist. Was this a fragmented global war or a collective struggle?"

"This is a story of China and the world—a narrative interwoven with global anti-fascist solidarity, where China's fight resonated globally and international allies stood by its side," he declared.

Wang stressed that the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and WWII were no mere temporal overlap but intertwined threads in history's fabric. International friends like Edgar Snow bridged understanding, earning China international empathy and support.

Doors wide open

Eight decades have passed since the smoke of the World Anti-Fascist War cleared, but new battles of perception have arisen.

In today's world, telling authentic, multi-dimensional and comprehensive stories about China and promoting exchange between the Chinese and other civilizations are particularly important, said He Guangcai, Secretary of the Peking University Committee of the CPC, in his address at the symposium at Peking University.

Qian Chengdan, a Boya Chair Professor at Peking University, speaking about Edgar Snow's risky journey to the Soviet area in north Shaanxi and his writing of the book *Red Star Over China*, noted that this demonstrated the American journalist's strong sense of justice and "his ability to see through the fog of history to discern the right direction of the times." Qian further pointed out that many people in the world today still do not understand China, and some take advantage of this to create a deliberately distorted image of the country.

First revised and enlarged edition of the classic account of Chinese communism
RED STAR OVER CHINA BY EDGAR SNOW
Published in January 1961
THE SELECTED WORKS OF ISRAEL EPSTEIN
THE PEOPLE'S WAR
Published in September 2015

Wang urged international visitors to emulate Edgar Snow, who breached blockades to witness reality firsthand. "Today, we hope more friends brave such biases, visit China and see its transformations."

China now opens its doors wider: visa-free access for citizens of 75 countries, visa-free transit for citizens of 55. The nation invites the world to experience its hospitality and progress through firsthand encounters.

The spiritual legacy of wartime resilience endures.

"The really cool thing is the Belt and Road Initiative, which lets so many countries get the trade going—that also means getting people talking, trading and communicating," Eric Foster, nephew of Helen Foster Snow, told *Beijing Review*. This China-proposed initiative aims to boost connectivity along and beyond the ancient Silk Road routes.

"President Xi Jinping said we want to build a shared future for humanity, which means everyone has the fair chance to survive and to live life in peace. This is the most important thing," Thomas Rabe said.

When asked what he thought Helen Foster Snow would think of today's China? Eric Foster paused for a second, and then replied, "She'd marvel at China's achievements. China has the world's most efficient government. She would be very, very proud of China," he said. **BR**

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COVER STORY

LEGACY OF HUMANITY

Love guards life, truth defends peace

By Wang Ruohan

A grand military parade was held in Beijing on September 3 to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the victory in the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and the World Anti-Fascist War. Among the international guests invited was Thomas Rabe, grandson of John Rabe, who attended the event as a representative of foreign friends who had made outstanding contributions to China's war of resistance. He stood in for his late grandfather, witnessing a stronger and more confident China.

Love for life

Return the world to humanity, and return humanity to itself. This humanitarian belief shaped John Rabe's life. Arriving in China in 1908 and living in the country for nearly 30 years, he served as German company Siemens' representative in cities such as Beijing, Tianjin and Nanjing, forging deep friendships with the Chinese people.

On the eve of the Japanese capture of Nanjing in December 1937, John Rabe, together with more than 20 other international residents, established an international safety zone to protect civilians. He was elected chairman of the International Committee for the Nanjing Safety Zone, which covered about 4 square km and provided shelter for some 250,000 Chinese civilians during the massacre. Between December 1937 and early 1938, over 300,000 Chinese civilians and unarmed soldiers were killed by Japanese troops.

At his own residence, John Rabe took in more than 600 refugees, all of whom survived the catastrophe. On December 26, 1937, he wrote in his diary: "I have received an unexpected Christmas gift—the lives of more than 600 people." His diary, meticulously documenting the atrocities of the Nanjing Massacre, became one of the most important and detailed historical records exposing Japanese war crimes.

COURTESY PHOTO

Group photo of members of the International Committee for the Nanjing Safety Zone and the Nanjing branch of the International Red Cross, with John Rabe third from left

On March 28, 2014, during a speech at the Körber Foundation in Germany, Chinese President Xi Jinping commended John Rabe's actions, noting that "We, in China, cherish the memory of Mr. Rabe as a man who demonstrated great compassion for life and love of peace."

The gratitude of the Chinese people was evident at the time. On New Year's Day of 1938, refugees at John Rabe's house lined up to bow to him and presented him with a large piece of red silk that read: "You are the living Buddha for hundreds of thousands of Chinese people."

Today, visitors from across China and around the world still visit the John Rabe House in Nanjing, paying tribute and learning about that painful chapter of history. Yang Shanyou, Director of the John Rabe and International Safety Zone Memorial Hall, told Xinhua News Agency that the site has become a special historical and cultural landmark, hosting academic exchanges and educational programs to pass on the spirit of humanitarianism and the pursuit of peace.

A legacy of humanity

John Rabe's humanitarian spirit deeply influenced his descendants.

"Everyone should think about what they can do for others." Thomas Rabe told *Beijing Review*, "We can show kindness and responsibility in our daily lives—

YIN KANG

Thomas Rabe presents the book *Rabe and China* at the John Rabe House in Nanjing City, Jiangsu Province, on August 18

standing up against injustice or lending a hand when others are in need. What matters is setting an example through small acts of humanity."

Preserving the diaries and ensuring the world knows the truth has become a mission of the Rabe family.

On December 12, 1996, Ursula Reinhardt, John Rabe's granddaughter, released *The Diaries of John Rabe* in New York City, the United States. The 2,460-page collection, comprising eight volumes, revealed the Japanese atrocities in Nanjing to the world.

This was not without danger. "My family received threatening phone calls at night, saying, 'We want to kill you.' We will never forget how dangerous it was to talk about the Nanjing diaries and to keep them," Thomas Rabe recalled.

Despite the threats, the Rabe family stood firm, just as their grandfather had decades earlier. Thomas Rabe has been working actively to preserve and organize John Rabe's historical documents, continuing to share his legacy. "My father inherited the diaries and archives from my grandfather, and later entrusted them to me. I have since donated the Nanjing manuscripts of the diaries to China's Central Archives," he said.

In addition, with the help of friends in Germany and China, Thomas Rabe published *Rabe and China*, a book that presents John Rabe's life, especially his 30 years in China and his wartime diaries. It also introduces the family's reflections on peace and the collaborative projects they have undertaken. The book was first released over 10 years ago without an ISBN number in English and Spanish, and the Chinese version was published in 2024. It will be published in more languages, and the scripts for a four-part documentary series have already been completed.

Together with his family, Thomas Rabe has also established six John Rabe Communication Centers around the world, dedicated to promoting John Rabe's humanitarian spirit and spreading peace and friendship.

When asked why history must be remembered, Thomas Rabe stated, "The prerequisite for reconciliation after aggression is for both sides to acknowledge the truth. Only by accepting what really happened can nations move forward—whether through cultural exchange, economic cooperation or political dialogue. This is the lesson we must learn from history, and the reason we cannot forget the war." **BR**

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From History, for Peace

By Lan Xinzhen

This year, we observe the 80th anniversary of the victory in the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression—a pivotal part of the World Anti-Fascist War.

China's contribution to the Allied victory was bolstered by extensive international support. As we commemorate this milestone in 2025, we are called to remember history, honor the heroes who fell, cherish peace and strive for a more promising future.

An ancient Chinese saying goes, "To understand the present, study history; to foresee the future, look to the past." It comes from the *Guanzi*, an ancient Chinese text attributed to Guan Zhong, a prominent statesman and philosopher during the Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 B.C.). The sentence intends to convey that when confused by current affairs, look to history for answers; when uncertain of the future, seek guidance from the past.

On December 13, 2014, President Xi Jinping quoted the classic line in his address at the national memorial ceremony for the victims of the Nanjing Massacre in the winter of 1937-38, during which invading Japanese forces killed more than 300,000 Chinese civilians and unarmed soldiers in Nanjing, then capital of China. He noted that the hardships of war suffered following the start of China's modern era in 1840 have given the Chinese people a deeper appreciation for peace. He firmly rejected the law of the jungle and militarism as paths to coexistence, asserting instead that peace and cooperation are the enduring drivers of human progress.

From the September 18 Incident in 1931, or the start of imperial Japan's invasion of China, to the full-scale war ignited by the Lugou Bridge Incident, also known as the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, in 1937, and finally to Japan's unconditional surrender in 1945, the Chinese people waged a fearless 14-year struggle. They sustained catastrophic losses, with over 35 million military and civilian casualties, before securing a great victory. Through tremendous national sacrifice, China established itself as a main Eastern theater of the World Anti-Fascist War and contributed immensely to its victory.

By safeguarding the truth of history and cherishing the fruits of peace, we ensure that justice endures and peace prevails for generations to come

At the same time, the Chinese people will forever cherish the invaluable support extended by countries, peoples and organizations across the globe that stand for peace and justice. The American Flying Tigers, all volunteer pilots, braved dangerous conditions to open and secure the Hump air route over the Himalayas, ensuring the continuous transport of essential strategic supplies to China. Canadian doctor Norman Bethune and Indian doctor Dwarkanath Kotnis came to China to save lives. German businessman John Rabe and Danish national Bernhard Sindberg, a supervisor at a cement plant on the outskirts of Nanjing, protected Chinese refugees during the Nanjing Massacre. British professor Michael Lindsay and European journalist Hans Shippe courageously told the world about China's resistance.

The victory in the war of resistance against Japanese aggression was a triumph achieved by the Chinese people fighting shoulder to shoulder with other Allied nations and peace-loving people across the globe. History has proven that justice will always defeat evil and peace will ultimately prevail over war. By safeguarding the truth of history and cherishing the fruits of peace, we ensure that justice endures and peace prevails for generations to come.

Today, facing changes unseen in a century and a global landscape entangled in turbulence and transformation, looking back at history in the spirit of upholding peace, development and win-win cooperation is highly relevant. The Chinese people will stand together with people around the world to firmly defend the victorious outcomes of the World Anti-Fascist War. All should be committed to safeguarding the international system centered on the United Nations and the international order based on international law. Together, we will tirelessly work toward building a community with a shared future for humanity and continue contributing to the noble cause of global peace and development. **BR**

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Better Together

SCO Summit 2025 charts new course for the group's next decade of development

By Tao Xing

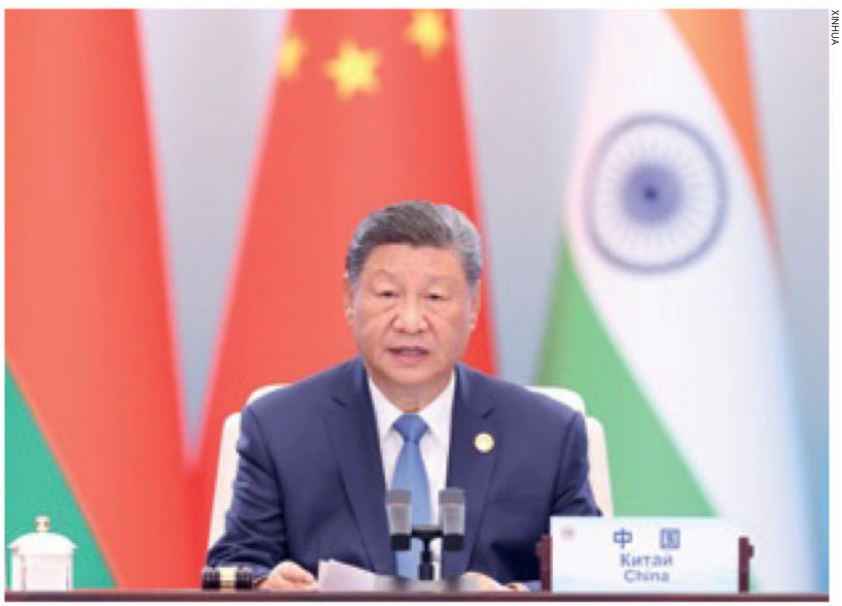
At the 19th Meeting of the Council of Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Summit in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, in June 2019, Chinese President Xi Jinping announced that China would be setting up an SCO demonstration base in Shaanxi Province for exchange and training on agricultural technologies to strengthen cooperation on modern agriculture with other countries in the region. The Council of Heads of State is the Eurasian political, economic and security organization's supreme decision-making body.

Later that same year, the demonstration base was established in Yangling, an agricultural hi-tech industrial demonstration zone in Shaanxi.

"The SCO Demonstration Base for Agricultural Technology Exchange and Training has evolved into an important platform for agricultural exchange and cooperation within the SCO," Wu Wengang, Vice Governor of Shaanxi, said at a news briefing in the northern Chinese port city of Tianjin on August 30. This year, Tianjin hosted the largest-ever SCO Summit in its 24-year history from August 31 to September 1, gathering the leaders of more than 20 countries and heads of 10 international organizations to build closer regional cooperation on security, sustainability and trade.

More than 80 training sessions have so far been held in Yangling, sharing agricultural knowledge and techniques with over 2,700 officials and professionals from SCO countries and countries participating in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Wu said, adding that over 50 online lectures have been conducted for SCO countries, attracting 51,000 participants. The China-proposed BRI aims to boost connectivity along and beyond the ancient Silk Road routes.

According to Wu, Shaanxi's agricultural trade with SCO countries has grown rapidly, with import and export volume rising from 640 million yuan ($89.6 million) in 2021 to 2.14 billion yuan ($300 million) in 2024—an increase of more than 230 percent.



XINHUA

Chinese President Xi Jinping chairs the "Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Plus" Meeting and delivers a statement in Tianjin on September 1

"China always aligns its development with that of the SCO and with the aspiration of the people of member states for a better life," Xi said when addressing the 25th Meeting of the Council of Heads of State of the SCO in Tianjin on September 1.

Founded in Shanghai in June 2001, the SCO has expanded from six founding members into the world's largest regional organization, with the participation of 27 countries spanning Asia, Europe and Africa, cooperation in more than 50 areas and a combined economic output of nearly $30 trillion. Laos was accepted as a partner at the Tianjin summit.

More real actions

Xi called on SCO member states to stay true to the organization's founding mission, and to promote its sound and sustained development with greater resolve and more practical measures.

Xi also proposed that SCO member states should seek common ground while putting aside differences, pursue mutual benefit and win-win results, champion openness and inclusiveness, uphold fairness and justice, and strive for real results and high efficiency.

He called for enhancing cooperation in areas such as energy, infrastructure, green industry, the digital economy, sci-tech innovation and AI, and establishing an SCO development bank as soon as possible.

To ensure real action is taken to better the development of the SCO, Xi announced that China will provide 2 billion yuan ($280 million) in grants to other SCO member states this year, and issue an additional 10 billion yuan ($1.4 billion) in loans to member banks of the SCO Interbank Consortium over the next three years.

In addition, China plans to implement 100 "small and beautiful" livelihood projects in the member states that need them. Over the next five years, China will establish 10 Luban Workshops, which provide vocational education, in the countries and provide 10,000 human resources training opportunities.

Irfan Ashraf, a reporter with Pakistan's Samaa TV, said China's contributions through SCO projects are making positive impacts in host countries. "China is contributing in a good way in the education sector of Pakistan, especially for our youngsters. They are coming to China and getting education here. China has opened up its universities for Pakistani students. It's really a very kind gesture and we respect it," he told *Beijing Review*.

"It will help the country to reduce poverty and uplift the lives of common Pakistanis," he added.

Strengthening economic ties

Xi said the member states should leverage the strengths of their mega-sized markets and their economic complementarity, and improve trade and investment facilitation.

The China-SCO Local Economic and Trade Cooperation Demonstration Area, which was established in Qingdao, a coastal city in Shandong Province, in 2018, has grown into a leading hub for international logistics, modern trade, two-way investment and cultural exchange.

At another SCO news briefing, held in Tianjin on August 29, Song Junji, Vice Governor of Shandong, said over the past six years, projects with a combined investment exceeding 150 billion yuan ($21 billion) have been launched in the demonstration area. Its trade with SCO countries has increased by an average of 56 percent annually, driving Shandong's investment in SCO countries to grow by 38.3 percent on an average annual basis.

Today, China's investment stock in other SCO member states has exceeded $84 billion, and its annual bilateral trade with other SCO member states has surpassed $500 billion.

"We are hoping for the trade cooperation between China and India to improve. And we're also hoping that some of the border issues and the disputes will be resolved," Rahul Shivshankar, the consulting editor with Indian omni-channel news network Network 18, told *Beijing Review*.

On August 31, Xi met with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who was in Tianjin for the SCO summit, agreeing that China and India are partners, not rivals.

"If the two countries can develop trust with each other, they can become very powerful players on the international stage," Shivshankar said. ►►

XINHUA

Chinese President Xi Jinping and his wife, Peng Liyuan, pose for a group photo with international guests attending the SCO Summit 2025 before a welcome banquet at the Meijiang Convention and Exhibition Center in Tianjin on August 31

Promoting global governance

Xi's proposal of the Global Governance Initiative (GGI) was the biggest highlight of the Tianjin summit.

He proposed the initiative at the "SCO Plus" Meeting on September 1, calling on countries to work in concert for a more just and equitable global governance system.

The GGI is the fourth landmark global initiative proposed by Xi, following the Global Development Initiative in 2021, the Global Security Initiative in 2022 and the Global Civilizations Initiative in 2023.

Xi introduced the five principles of the GGI—adhering to sovereign equality, abiding by international rule of law, practicing multilateralism, advocating the people-centered approach, and focusing on taking real action.

While the historical trends of peace, development, cooperation and mutual benefit remain unchanged, the Cold War mentality, hegemonism and protectionism continue to haunt the world, Xi said, adding that new threats and challenges have only been increasing, and the world finds itself in a new period of turbulence and transformation.

"Global governance has come to a new crossroads," he said.

This year is the 80th anniversary of the victory in the World Anti-Fascist War and the founding of the United Nations. Xi emphasized the importance of firmly safeguarding the status and authority of the UN, and ensuring its irreplaceable, key role in global governance.

Xi called on the SCO to step up to play a leading role and set an example in carrying out the GGI, saying the group should contribute to safeguarding world peace and stability.

"We should continue to uphold the principles of non-alliance, non-confrontation and not targeting any third party," he added.

Emphasizing that the organization should take responsibility for open cooperation across the globe, Xi said, "We should continue to dismantle walls, not erect them; we should seek integration, not decoupling."

Other participants in the meeting expressed strong support for the GGI, saying its proposal is both timely and necessary. They highlighted the need for a more effective governance philosophy and system as the world is

XINHUA

Residents and tourists enjoy Tianjin's nighttime views along the banks of the Haihe River on August 25

XINHUA

A reporter at the Media Center of the SCO Summit 2025 on August 30

XINHUA

Reporters interview Pakistani students from the Luban Workshop at the Experience Center of Tianjin Light Industry Vocational Technical College in Tianjin on August 30

TAO XING

Reporters try their hand at making lacquer fans, a form of intangible cultural heritage, at the Media Center of the SCO Summit 2025 on August 31

confronted with widening deficits in governance, challenges to sustainable development and rising unilateralism.

SCO Secretary General Nurlan Yermekbayev said the fact that the GGI was put forward on the SCO platform carries profound symbolic significance.

"Indeed, the principles enshrined in the initiative are of paramount importance, with the people-centered approach standing out in particular. After all, as we all recognize, the initiative's central purpose is to advance human development and improve people's livelihoods," he added.

A growing platform

"The SCO, with its enormous economic, intellectual, resource and technological potential, is consistently expanding its influence on the international arena. This is particularly important in the current climate of global uncertainty," President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev said at the 25th Meeting of the Council of Heads of State of the SCO.

"We believe that the SCO's voice should be even more compelling and resolute, reflecting our common political will and serving as a call for decisive action in the name of a peaceful future and sustainable progress," he added.

A development strategy for the SCO in the 2026-35 period was approved at the Tianjin summit. It sets the tone and direction for the organization's growth in the next decade, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said when meeting the press together with Yermekbayev on September 1.

The summit also issued a statement defending the victorious outcomes of World War II.

Four new SCO centers were inaugurated at the event with respective tasks of countering security threats and challenges, tackling transnational organized crimes, improving information security and strengthening anti-drug cooperation.

"It is important for countries of the Global South to have a platform, where they can collectively raise their voice and send a message to other countries of the world, advanced economies of the world in the West," Shivshankar said, commenting on the SCO's role in global affairs. **BR**

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Safeguarding History, Shaping the Future

Honoring a shared WWII victory enhances mutual understanding between Chinese and American people

By Zhao Wei

On the hangar deck of the historic aircraft carrier *USS Hornet*, now serving as a floating museum in Alameda, California, beneath steel trusses and surrounded by aircraft once famed for their roles in World War II (WWII) battles, diplomats, historians, veterans and community representatives from China and the United States gathered on August 30 to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the victory in the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and the World Anti-Fascist War.

More than 400 attendees moved between exhibits and a central stage, where speakers honored shared sacrifice and called for renewed practical cooperation. A ceremonial handover of wartime archives, donated by overseas Chinese to Sun Yat-sen University in Guangzhou, capital of Guangdong Province in south China, underscored the event's forward-looking message: preserving memory to inspire future generations.

Framing the moment

The event was co-hosted by the USS Hornet Sea, Air and Space Museum, the Atlanta-based Carter Center and the Museum of the War of the Chinese People's Resistance Against Japanese Aggression in Beijing. Keynote addresses, historical exhibits and personal testimonies traced the arc from wartime cooperation to modern-day responsibilities under the United Nations Charter. Speakers emphasized that the cooperation between China and the United States during WWII is a living resource for easing tensions in bilateral ties and strengthening people-to-people ties today.

In a video address, Chinese Ambassador to the U.S. Xie Feng tied remembrance to present-day obligations. "Eighty years ago, the Chinese people, together with the American people and all forces for justice around the world, completely defeated the fascist powers with unbreakable will and heroic resistance," he said. "Memories of history will not fade with the passage of time, and the great truth resounds even more strongly today, that justice will prevail, peace will prevail, and the people will prevail."

Zhang Jianmin, Chinese Consul General in San Francisco, said at the event, "China was the first to resist fascist aggression and the last to end fighting, suffering more than 35 million casualties." Citing Chinese villagers who sheltered U.S. airmen after the Doolittle Raid in April 1942, Zhang pointed out that wartime solidarity extended beyond formal alliances. "When the international community stands united, there is no evil that cannot be defeated and no peace that cannot be defended," he added.

On April 18, 1942, a group of 16 U.S. B-25 bombers, led by Lieutenant Colonel James Doolittle, took off from the *USS Hornet* and raided Japanese cities, including Tokyo, in retaliation for the attack on Pearl Harbor. After the strike, 15 of the bombers crashed into the sea and the mountainous areas of China's Jiangxi, Zhejiang, Anhui and Fujian provinces. Of the 75 airmen aboard the planes, 64 were rescued by the Chinese people, mostly villagers who had received no official notice the planes had crashed.

COURTESY PHOTO

Yu Yunquan (right), Vice President of China International Communications Group (CICG), and Li Yafang (left), Associate Editor in Chief of CICG, talk with Clifford Long Jr., son of a member of the Flying Tigers, at an event commemorating the 80th anniversary of the victory in the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and the World Anti-Fascist War at the USS Hornet Sea, Air and Space Museum in Alameda, California, the U.S., on August 30

XINHUA

The National WWII Museum of the U.S. holds an event commemorating the 80th anniversary of the war's end in New Orleans, Louisiana, the U.S., on August 14

Sustaining memory

Laura Fies, Executive Director of the USS Hornet museum, framed the museum as a living classroom. "Let us remember the past, celebrate the present and inspire the future," Fies said at the event, pointing to the day's turnout as proof that partnerships between museums, schools and diaspora communities can expand impact without compromising accuracy.

Yu Yunquan, Vice President of China International Communications Group, echoed Fies, emphasizing the need to broaden access to wartime materials and scholarly research results. Through multilingual publications, joint programs and academic exchange, Yu said, institutions can turn archival records into shared narratives. "We look forward to working hand in hand with peace-loving organizations in the United States to build a more stable and prosperous world together," he said, emphasizing that cultural and communication collaboration serves as a defense against the denial and distortion of history.

Jeffrey Greene, Chairman of the Sino-American Aviation Heritage Foundation, recalled the heroic flights and the rescue of U.S. airmen by Chinese people that defined the legacy of the American Volunteer Group (AVG) and subsequent U.S. Army Air Forces operations in China. The AVG, popularly known as the Flying Tigers in China, was a U.S. air squadron composed of pilots from the U.S. Army Air Forces, Navy and Marine Corps, which helped the Chinese fight the Japanese invaders during WWII.

"What makes this story unique is that whenever American airmen were forced down, they were nearly always saved by Chinese villagers, who knew that discovery meant death for themselves and their families," he said. "This was more than alliance, it was humanity in its purest form." Greene urged younger participants to translate reverence into action through study, exchange and service.

John Easterbrook, grandson of U.S. General Joseph Stilwell, who served as commander in chief of the U.S. armed forces in the China-Burma-India Theater during WWII, sketched a family line threaded through wartime Chongqing in southwest China to present-day California. He cited the Stilwell Museum in Chongqing, a scholarship in California for Chinese students and the 2011 National Memories photo exhibition that showcased U.S. wartime assistance to China. "My grandfather's respect for the Chinese people has been passed down through five generations," Easterbrook said.

Centenarian Chinese veterans Li Yurong and Lin Huajian attended the ceremony, representing a generation that bore the direct toll of the war. Their presence, alongside families of Flying Tigers veterans—highlighted the event's commitment to passing down the wartime spirit of friendship and cooperation between the two countries.

"People of our two countries should stay undaunted by the headwinds of 'political correctness,' dispel the gloom of the 'chilling effect' and foster greater warmth through reaching out to and connecting hearts with each other," Xie said.

Looking ahead

If the throughline of the day was sacrifice, the refrain was responsibility. Greene distilled the point in a closing reflection: "Even in humanity's darkest hours, people can choose loyalty over fear, and compassion over self-preservation. Peace is built when nations look beyond borders and walk together with hope."

Eighty years after victory in the war against fascism, participants aboard the *USS Hornet* argued that honoring the dead requires hard work among the living. "History is a mirror, helping us observe the present," Xie said. "Eight decades ago, China and the U.S. fought side by side against fascist aggression. Today, as the world's two largest economies and permanent members of the UN Security Council, our two countries share a special and significant responsibility for world peace, stability and prosperity, and should all the more demonstrate the vision and play our role as major countries."

On the hangar deck, that proposition read more like a plan, one that begins with archives and exhibitions, and continues with young generations who will carry the story forward. **BR**

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CHINA MOSAIC

Weekly video commentary direct from Beijing

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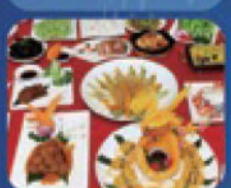

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THROUGH THEIR EYES

People from around the world take you on a journey to rediscover China

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Hands-on in Hohhot

A visitor shakes hands with a robot at the fifth China-Mongolia Expo in Hohhot, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, on August 29. The expo, held from August 25 to 29, attracted over 1,500 exhibitors from China and abroad. First held in 2015, the expo has become an important platform for promoting economic and trade exchanges between China and Mongolia, and driving regional development.

Green Spaces

Shanghai Municipality has built over 1,000 parks, including 522 urban parks, 371 pocket parks, 119 forest recreation parks and one theme park, local government authorities said on August 28.

As a metropolis with limited land resources, Shanghai has creatively expanded its green spaces by transforming idle land, underutilized areas and spaces under elevated roads, according to the Shanghai Landscaping and City Appearance Administrative Bureau.

Additionally, green spaces belonging to institutions, schools and enterprises have been opened to the public, adding over 100 hectares of accessible greenery.

Since 2021, Shanghai has increased its total parkland area by over 2,500 hectares, raising its per-capita green space from 8.5 to 9.5 square meters, the bureau said.

Over the next five years, Shanghai intends to build over 500 additional parks and increase its per-capita green space by another square meter, according to bureau official Guan Qunfei.

Summer Travel Rush

China has wrapped up its 62-day summer travel season, with record highs in both passenger and freight transport, according to China State Railway Group Co. Ltd. (China Railway), Xinhua News Agency reported on September 1.

From July 1 to August 31, 943 million passenger trips were made by railway—up 4.7 percent from the same period of 2024 and a record high.

The country's railways handled 3.48 million trips by foreign passengers during this period, an increase of 23.9 percent year on year, as the country continued efforts to facilitate travel for international visitors.

A total of 702 million tons of goods were transported by railway in the summer travel rush—up 4.8 percent year on year.

The summer travel rush is usually a busy season for the country's railway system, as college students return home for the summer vacation, while family visits and tourist trips also increase during this period.

New Outlet Complex

The Chinese capital has completed the construction of the Well Town project, its largest commercial outlet complex. The town is located near Universal Beijing Resort and is expected to begin operations by late 2025, according to Beijing Urban Construction Group, Co. Ltd. (BUCG) on August 27.

With total investment exceeding 10 billion yuan ($1.4 billion), the project occupies an area of approximately 500,000 square meters and comprises three main parts: the Nous Land Hotel, the Wangfujing Outlet and Tingyun Town.

The project is located in the Beijing Municipal Administrative Center in the east of the municipality, co-developed and constructed by Beijing Infrastructure Investment Co. Ltd., Beijing Tourism Group and BUCG. After the project begins operations, the public will be able to access it directly by subways.

Barrier-Free Medical Institutions

Medical institutions in China must step up the development of a barrier-free environment and ensure that people with disabilities receive services with ease when they visit such institutions, according to a document released on August 27.

The document, jointly released by the National Health Commission and the China Disabled Persons' Federation, listed several measures for medical institutions to follow.

Medical institutions should set up barrier-free signs and accessible parking spaces that fit relevant standards, read the document. It also necessitated setting up lower counters for certain groups of people with disabilities, including wheelchair users.

The document requires medical institutions to equip self-service devices with barrier-free functions, such as voice-assisted text reading or large fonts, or to retain traditional service methods such as on-site assistance or manual service, in order to provide greater convenience to patients with disabilities.

SOE Performance

China's state-owned and state-controlled enterprises showed

generally stable performance in the first seven months of 2025, official data showed on August 29.

Their total operating revenues came in at 47.31 trillion yuan ($6.7 trillion) during the January-July period, unchanged from a year earlier, according to data from the Ministry of Finance.

Total profits of these companies reached nearly 2.48 trillion yuan ($347 billion) during the period, edging down 3.3 percent year on year, while their taxes and fees payable dropped slightly by 0.4 percent to nearly 3.47 trillion yuan ($486 billion).

The asset-liability ratio of these enterprises stood at 65.1 percent by the end of July, up 0.3 percentage point from a year earlier, the data showed.

Inbound Consumption

China will continue to promote inbound consumption, a crucial area for expanding domestic consumption, the Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM) said on August 28.

In the first six months of this year, the number of foreign visitors entering China exceeded 19 million, up 30 percent year on year. The tax-refund sales volume surged by 95 percent year on year in the first half of the year, data from the ministry showed.

During this period, the number of tax refund shops more than doubled, exceeding 7,200, according to data from the State Administration of Taxation.

MOFCOM plans to implement several measures to further boost inbound consumption, including optimizing the layouts of tax-refund shops, expanding product offerings and improving service quality.

It will also guide local authorities to organize diverse consumption promotion activities and create integrated consumption scenarios, so as to provide a better experience for foreign visitors in China in terms of shopping, tourism, culture, and sports, the ministry said.

Largest Private Firms

China unveiled the latest rankings of its 500 largest private enterprises on August 28, with e-commerce giant JD.com claiming the top spot, reflecting the robust growth of the country's private sector.

The list, compiled by the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce (ACFIC), was released at the 2025 China Top 500 Private Enterprises Summit in Shenyang, capital of Liaoning Province.

JD.com, Alibaba (China) Co. Ltd. and Hengli Group Co. Ltd. retained the top three positions on the list for the fourth consecutive year. JD.com reported annual revenue of approximately 1.16 trillion yuan ($162 billion), becoming the first private company in China to surpass the trillion-yuan mark.

This is the 27th survey of large-scale private enterprises conducted by the ACFIC. It has released the top 500 list according to their operating revenues.

According to the survey, the entry threshold in terms of operating revenue for China's top 500 private enterprises rose to around 27 billion yuan ($3.8 billion) in 2024, with their total operating revenue reaching 43.05 trillion yuan ($6 trillion), reflecting continued growth in overall scale.

The operational efficiency of the top 500 enterprises has continued to improve, with 361 companies reporting year-on-year revenue growth last year. Their combined net profit reached 1.8 trillion yuan ($252 billion), averaging about 3.6 billion yuan ($504 million) per company, a 6.48-percent increase from the previous year.

XINHUA

Splish Splash

People attend a traditional water splashing festival in Baoting Li and Miao Autonomous County, Hainan Province, on August 29. The festival opened that same day on the occasion of the Qixi Festival, the Chinese Valentine's Day.

XINHUA

A New Start

Students arrive at a primary school in Guiyang, Guizhou Province, on September 1. The new semester for primary and secondary schools kicked off in many parts of China that same day.

MALAYSIA

Soldiers take part in an event celebrating the 68th anniversary of national independence, in Putrajaya on August 31

AFGHANISTAN

People gather near an ambulance at a hospital in Kunar Province on September 1. Several provinces, including Kunar, were hit by a 6.0-magnitude earthquake, which has killed over 1,400 people

ITALY

Members of the 82nd Venice Film Festival Jury pose for a group photo at the event's opening ceremony in Venice on August 27. The event ran until September 6, with 21 films competing for the Golden Lion award

SOUTH AFRICA

Ahmed Naser Al-Raisi, President of the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), speaks at the 27th INTERPOL African Regional Conference in Cape Town on August 27. He vowed the agency's support for collaboration and innovation on the African continent to tackle organized crime and cyber threats

THAILAND

Paetongtarn Shinawatra addresses the press at Government House in Bangkok on August 29. The Constitutional Court removed the suspended prime minister from office for violating the constitution in a phone conversation regarding the border issue with Cambodia

UNITED STATES

The national flag flies at half-staff at the White House in Washington, D.C. on August 27. A shooting occurred earlier that day at Annunciation Catholic School in the city of Minneapolis, killing two children and injuring 17 others

Reels of Remembrance

Chinese cinema as a witness to the war of resistance against Japanese aggression

By Peng Jiawei

"The verb 'shoot' can mean two very different things—the firing of weapons in war and the capturing of that violence on film," Shen Ao, director of *Dead to Rights*, said.

If cinema has turned World War II (WWII) into a standalone genre, it is one largely defined through Western lenses. While Charlie Chaplin's *The Great Dictator*, Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* and Christopher Nolan's *Dunkirk* are featured in every WWII film list, the Chinese front, where the prolonged struggle against Japanese aggression continued for 14 years, from 1931 to 1945, is often missing from the roll call.

A closer look at China's post-1949 film industry reveals that the war has been a theme woven throughout its history.

From the peasant heroes in *Tunnel Warfare* (1966) to the corpse-strewn city wall in *The Bloody Battle of Taierzhuang* (1986), and from the sweeping epic *City of Life and Death* (2009) to the intimate portrayal of a small photo studio in *Dead to Rights* (2025), Chinese filmmakers have continued to build their own WWII canon—one that chronicles not only the growth of a young industry but also the broader shifts in aesthetics and how the country confronts its past.

Screens of solidarity

After the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the domestic film industry found itself tasked with the mission of conveying a new national identity born out of the tumult of wars and revolutions. And the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-45) became the genre that most powerfully captured this narrative of national struggle.

A prominent subgenre within this category focused on guerrilla warfare, a tactic of hit-and-run attacks, sabotage and ambushes that was extensively used in north China during the war.

These films often feature a morally unwavering and larger-than-life protagonist. Yet, unlike their Western counterparts, they emphasize collective participation over individual heroism, underscoring the idea that the strength of the nation lay in its people and that victory comes not from lone heroes but from the solidarity of the many.

A standout example of this genre is Zhao Ming's *Railway Guerrilla* (1956), which follows a band of guerrilla fighters living alongside a railway line in Shandong Province. Led by the bold and decisive Liu Hong, the group uses their intimate knowledge of the local terrain to disrupt Japanese supply trains and launch strategic attacks.

The film, on the one hand, is about heroes, who were portrayed as ghost-like figures capable of performing extraordinary feats in the face of overwhelming odds. Yet ultimately, it is about the power of the masses, as it creates a space in which local fishermen, railway workers and even children's brigade members all participate in passing on intelligence and sabotaging the enemy's operations.

Another film that masterfully captures this ethos of collective strength is *Tunnel Warfare*, directed by Ren Xudong, which tells the story of how a small village in the heart of the North China Plain, under the leadership of a local militia sergeant, defended itself against Japanese troops by building an

COURTESY PHOTO

extensive network of tunnels.

By painstakingly reconstructing the tunnel system on set, the film portrays tunnel warfare as a symbol for collective wisdom by bringing to life a historical period in which by 1944, the flatlands of Hebei Province and neighboring provinces had spawned more than 12,000 km of such tunnels.

"The village in the film is not one place, but the distillation of countless villages and countless fighters who, through long years of war, invented and perfected the system," Ren said of the film.

When heroes became human

With the launch of China's reform and opening-up policy in 1978 came a marked shift in how China's wartime experience was portrayed on the big screen.

The heroes were no longer flat embodiments of collective strength but fleshed-out individuals with their own desires, flaws and moral ambiguities. The exultant spirit of the earlier decades gave way to a more sobering portrayal of the cruelty of war and a fuller exploration of its emotional dimensions. Endings often carried a tragic note rather than a triumphant one, recasting the genre as a vehicle for reflection on trauma, memory and human complexity.

The Bloody Battle of Taierzhuang, co-directed by Yang Guangyuan and Zhai Junjie, epitomizes this pivot. The film recounts China's first major victory in the war, fought in the spring of 1938 at the strategic town of Taierzhuang in Shandong.

Rather than romanticizing the battle as a morale-boosting triumph, the film adopted a near-documentary style to press home the horror of war: charred bodies strewn along the canal banks, shattered bricks mingled with torn flesh, and soldiers using their own mutilated bodies to block the advance of Japanese tanks.

The guerrilla fighters in *Railway Guerrilla* (1956)

The film's most haunting scene is its four-minute closing sequence, where a trembling camera moves through mountains of corpses stacked against a shattered city wall, above which a tattered Chinese flag flutters alone in the wind.

"It is impossible for any viewer to feel joy at the final victory when confronted with so many corpses lying across the battlefield," a recent commenter on Chinese review platform Douban wrote.

The reopening of the Beijing Film Academy in 1978 also ushered in a new breed of filmmakers—the fifth generation of Chinese directors—who sought to explore the themes of history and national psychology through more subjective, individualistic and visually rich modes of storytelling. For them, the years 1931 to 1945 provided a fertile ground for artistic experimentation.

The most renowned example is *Red Sorghum* (1988),

COURTESY PHOTO

A poster for *The Flowers of War* (2011)

the directorial debut of Zhang Yimou, which put the young director on the map by winning the Golden Bear at the Berlin Film Festival.

The film tells the story of a young peasant girl, who was sold into a pre-arranged marriage with a leprous winemaker and, after her husband's death, forced to run the winery while contending with the invading Japanese army.

As Zhang stated in an interview, the film was "an attempt to fuse the harsh realities of death with the strength of life." By using the color red in the wine, the sorghum field, the wedding and the spilled blood of war, the film builds up a narrative that is at once about a young woman's rebellion against the old patriarchal order, the tragedies of war and the unbending grit and resolve of a nation.

The power of perspective

The release of *Red Sorghum* not only marked the first time a Chinese film won a top prize at an A-list film festival but also changed the life of a young man named Lu Chuan.

"When the film ended, I found myself unable to rise, as if a giant hand were holding me down," ▶▶

COURTESY PHOTO

A scene in *City of Life and Death* shows a Japanese photographer capturing images of Japanese soldiers as they enter Nanjing, then capital of China, in late 1937

he later wrote. "At that moment, I was struck by the power of film—a power that I, too, wished to possess."

Two decades later, Lu's *City of Life and Death* landed as both a major box office hit and winner of the top prize at Spain's San Sebastian Film Festival.

Shot in black and white, the film recounts the Nanjing Massacre, the mass murder of Chinese people by the Japanese army after its seizure of China's then capital, Nanjing, in the winter of 1937-38.

Perhaps the film's most radical departure from earlier traditions is its incorporation of the perspective of a bewildered Japanese soldier, whose eyes constantly take in what his conscience cannot fully process and whose guilt eventually drives him to suicide.

This insider's gaze not only exposes the sheer brutality of the Japanese forces but also foregrounds a broader theme: how war dehumanizes those caught within it.

The film is part of a wider shift in China's film scene in the 21st century. On the one hand, the rapid modernization of the domestic film industry, together with advances in motion capture, computer animation and other filmmaking techniques, has pushed Chinese WWII films closer to the scale and spectacle of Hollywood blockbusters.

On the other hand, as audiences grew increasingly wary of formulaic war narratives, Chinese filmmakers began seeking fresher angles and more diverse perspectives.

One way to do that is to move beyond the conventional stories of soldiers to focus on ordinary people—figures usually kept in the margins of traditional war epics. With its unprecedented toll on life, the Nanjing Massacre opened a vast space for cinematic experimentation with this creative shift.

Two years after the release of *City of Life and Death*, Zhang Yimou offered his own take on the event with *The Flowers of War* (2011), which follows an American who seeks refuge in a Nanjing church alongside a group of women as Japanese troops ravage the city.

The film has all the elements of a 21st-century commercial blockbuster. With a budget of 600 million yuan (approximately $100 million at the time), it was then the most expensive Chinese movie ever made, starred Christian Bale, one of Hollywood's most sought-after A-listers, and enlisted the special effects team behind American war epics such as *Saving Private Ryan* (1998) and *Band of Brothers* (2001).

Beyond these trappings, what really sets the film apart from the rest is its perspective. While women's voices have always been present in Chinese war films, the encounter between two very different groups of women confined to the same space gives the film a new dimension, with one group composed of 13 teenage convent students and the other of 13 courtesans.

By folding the narrative into a single space, the film traces how these seemingly irreconcilable groups set aside their prejudices to forge a bond, culminating

A poster for *Dead to Rights*

A scene in *Dead to Rights* showing a Japanese photographer taking pictures

in the courtesans' decision to offer themselves up to the Japanese soldiers to protect the students. If *City of Life and Death* is about how war can strip away humanity, *The Flowers of War*, with its focus on the sacred in the ordinary, suggests that humans possess an innate capacity for kindness and empathy.

"In all of the movies in the past, everything is so big and massive, with so much violence and destruction," Zhang said in an interview with *The New York Times* about the film in December 2011. "Yet I love the art of making something small to show something big."

A more recent film, which also chooses to distill a nation's trauma into the survival ordeals of a few civilians, is Shen's *Dead to Rights*, which follows a group of civilians as they seek refuge in a photo studio during the Nanjing Massacre and eventually risk their lives to smuggle photographs out of the city and expose the atrocities committed by the Japanese army.

"After studying countless records of the massacre, we discovered many ordinary people who showed extraordinary courage, yet whose names were lost to history," Shen wrote in *People's Daily* newspaper. "*Dead to Rights* was made to tell their story."

Another widely noted aspect of the film is its meditation on the power of the camera. In one scene, the film interweaves portraits of the dead with the moments in which those pictures were captured. By the film's end, the photos documenting Japan's wartime atrocities become an important piece of evidence during the post-war tribunals—suggesting that, despite Japan's attempt to erase its deeds, truth lives on.

On the surface, these scenes are about photography; more deeply, they reflect on cinema's own capacity to record and preserve.

As Shen puts it, "film is the witness to an era." The "era" here refers not only to the years between 1931 and 1945, but also to the shifting decades in which these films were created.

Over the past seven decades, the industry has undergone profound changes—marketization, technological innovation and a deepening humanitarian lens in the portrayal of war. What endures, however, is film's role as a reminder never to forget. **BR**

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A Symbol of Security

By Vladimir Berezhnikh

COURTESY PHOTO

The author on the Great Wall in Beijing

It so happened that I spent the last days of summer in Shenyang, the capital of Liaoning Province. The main historical landmark in Shenyang is the Shenyang Imperial Palace, which was built in 1625 as the palace of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), but today serves as a museum. I was staying at a nearby hotel, so after dinner, I went out for a walk there.

It was a summer evening, the daytime heat had given way to a pleasant coolness. The museum, of course, was already closed, but the square next to it was full of people. Right there on the steps, a mother spread a reed mat and sat with her two sons and a bicycle; nearby, a group of people were playing cards; a little farther away, in a pavilion, mahjong enthusiasts were absorbed in their game, with someone lighting for them with a smartphone in the darkness. A group was dancing to music from a portable speaker.

But what caught my attention most were the photographers, arranging night photo shoots for young women dressed in traditional ethnic costumes—a noticeable trend in contemporary China, reflecting the revival of interest in heritage and the fashions of bygone eras.

This description of a summer evening in Shenyang is directly connected with the recent massive military parade in Beijing, held to commemorate the victory in the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and the World Anti-Fascist War. For it is only thanks to the existence of a powerful, well-armed army bound by iron discipline that the people of China are able to spend their summer evenings, popular holidays and such grand official events—such as the military parade—in peace and tranquility.

Ten years ago, on the 70th anniversary of victory in the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, as editor-in-chief of the magazine *Russia and China*, I attended the parade myself. I photographed China's leaders and the honored guests—heads of state—who observed the parade from the Tiananmen Rostrum, just 30 meters from the press stands.

Overseas media coverage was one of the outcomes the Chinese Government had intended in organizing the parade and inviting foreign correspondents. Namely, to deliver a clear message to those irresponsible world leaders who threaten China and attempt to stall its development: The Chinese army is ready to deliver a powerful response to any aggressor, no matter how strong.

I witnessed all of this at the previous anniversary military parade in Beijing. In the 10 years that have passed since then, new branches of the military have been created, and the People's Liberation Army (PLA) now possesses the most advanced unmanned systems in the world: aerial and underwater drones armed with combat lasers, combat robots, swarms of drones and much more.

On the morning of September 2, President Xi Jinping held talks in Beijing with Russian President Vladimir Putin, who was in China for the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Summit 2025 in Tianjin from August 31 to September 1, as well as the commemorative activities of celebrating the 80th anniversary of China's V-Day. Xi stressed that the aim of putting forward the Global Governance Initiative, which was launched at the summit, is to work with all countries for a more just and equitable global governance system and advancing toward a community with a shared future for humanity.

The beginning of autumn is perhaps the most beautiful season in China. The harvest is underway, the summer heat is receding, and people are beginning to prepare for the Mid-Autumn Festival. Yet, if in the past, a significant part of China's population celebrated on an empty stomach, in the new China, hunger has left the country. There have been times in the old days when Chinese farmers observed the festival while anxiously glancing around, constantly fearing of attacks from enemies. Today they have the PLA under the Communist Party of China to ensure the country's security and development. **BR**

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